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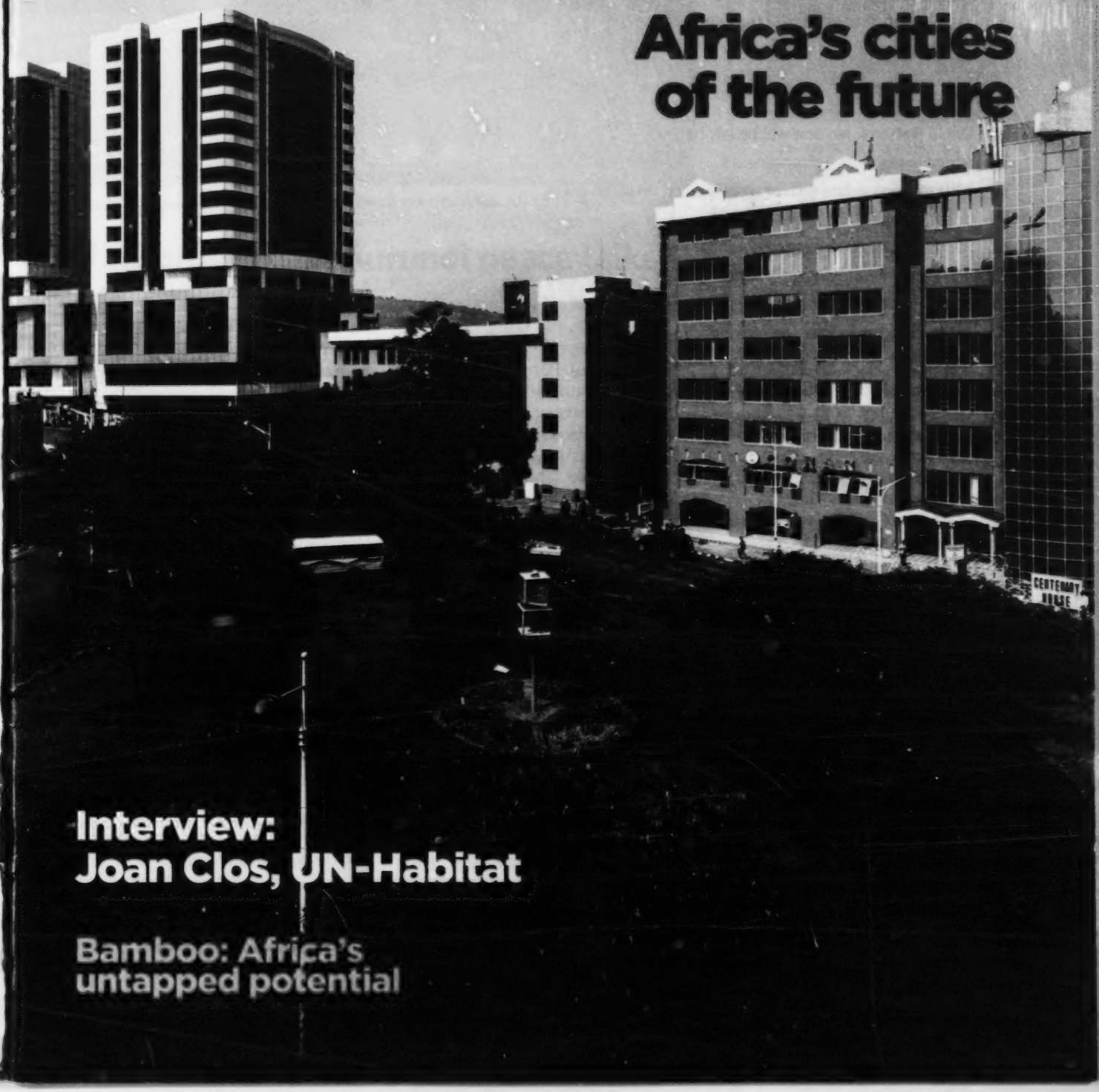

Africa's cities of the future

Interview: Joan Clos, UN-Habitat

Bamboo: Africa's untapped potential

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Cover photo: ***Kigali, the capital city of Rwanda.*** *Panos/Sven Torfinn*

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (in orange tie) at the closing of the Climate Summit in Paris last December. *UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe*

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AFRICA WATCH: BURUNDI

Demonstrators carry a Burundi flag during a protest in Bujumbura, Burundi. Reuters/G. Tomasevic

Slow progress in Burundi peace talks

BY FRANCK KUWONU

Scores of Burundian refugees continue to pour into the neighbouring states of Rwanda, Tanzania, Zambia, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, even as diplomatic efforts by the African Union and others increase pressure for an end to Burundi's political crisis. The number of people in forced exile has now passed the 250,000 mark, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and more than 400 people have been killed since April.

Burundi's difficulties began in April 2015 when President Pierre Nkurunziza controversially extended his term in office.

When UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visited the capital, Bujumbura, at the end of February, Burundian authorities promised to free 2,000 political prisoners and lift the ban on two independent radio stations as a sign of their commitment to resolving the crisis.

Later, during a visit by an African Union delegation, the Burundian government further committed to accepting the deployment of 100 military monitors and 100 human rights observers to help reduce the violence. The government had refused an initial offer of 5,000 peacekeeping soldiers in December.

Meanwhile, independent human rights experts commissioned by the UN have started investigating alleged mass graves in the country. "We have good access to government officials, to the police and also to victims and civil societies," Christof Heyns, UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, told the German broadcaster, Deutsche Welle. The government continues to deny the existence of any mass graves.

But while the violence of the past year seems to have abated, human rights violations and targeted assassination are reportedly continuing on the ground. On 21 February two people were killed by gunmen while another was killed in a grenade attack at a market in Bujumbura.

"Whereas dead bodies on the streets of Bujumbura were a daily occurrence in the second half of 2015, many abuses are now taking place under the radar, with security forces secretly taking people away and refusing to account for them," said Human Rights Watch, an international advocacy group, in its February 2016 report on Burundi. The government disputes the group's findings.

Fears are growing that the current situation, if allowed to

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QUOTABLES

UN Women/J Carter

The pace of change we have seen over the decades is directly correlated to the investment we have made. Where we made good investment in women and girls, the return is high and life changing.

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Under-Secretary-General and UN Women Executive Director at the opening of the 60th session of the Commission on the Status of Women on 14 March 2016

At this time of grave injustices, devastating wars, mass displacement, grinding poverty and other man-made causes of suffering, the International Day of Happiness is a global chance to assert that peace, well-being and joy deserve primacy.

Ban Ki-moon, UN secretary-general during this year's International Day of Happiness marked on 20 March

In this wealthy world of ours, no one should die or have their dignity destroyed just because of lack of money.

Kristalina Georgieva, European Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response at European Commission, ahead of the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016

One of the objectives of Sustainable Development Goals is to have sustainable cities that provide opportunities for all, including access to basic services, energy, housing and transport. In this special coverage, we look at some African cities like Lagos and Kigali that are on the move and others such as Abidjan and Mogadishu that are recovering.

A model of the future Kigali City. An ambitious Kigali development master plan aims to turn the city into the 'Singapore of Africa'. Panos/Sven Torfinn

Africa's cities of the future

Proper planning key to sustainable cities

BY **BUSANI BAFANA**

With an annual economic growth rate of about 5% over the last decade, driven mainly by the commodities boom, African cities have seen skyrocketing population growth, forcing governments to face a host of development challenges.

Africa is urbanizing at a rate of 4% per year, according to UN-Habitat, the United Nations agency tasked with assisting national programmes relating to human settlements through the provision of capital and technical assistance, particularly in developing countries. Population shifts from rural to urban areas lead to a number of challenges such as overcrowding, pollution and crime, among others.

"Urbanization in the Africa of today is an untapped tool for development and economic growth," says Joan Clos, the executive director of UN-Habitat.

Over the next 15 years, cities in Africa will experience higher growth rates than other regions of the world, predicts Oxford Economics, a British firm that specialises in global forecasting and quantitative analysis for business and government, with Cape Town, Dar es Salaam, Johannesburg and Luanda becoming Africa's major economic giants.

Jean Pierre Elong Mbassi, the secretary-general of United Cities and Local Governments-Africa (UCLG-A), a body representing over 1,000 African cities, describes sustainable cities as "cities of the future today," meaning those that can withstand the intense pressure from rapid development and urban investments but have a low impact on the environment.

Economic growth and a rapidly growing population of about 1 billion mean more urbanization in Africa than in any other continent, with major cities in Africa currently contributing about $700 billion to the continent's GDP. This figure is set to grow to $1.7 trillion by 2030, notes Oxford Economics.

UN-Habitat says rapid urbanization, especially in cities in the developing world, is bringing challenges in the distribution

of people and resources, as well as in land use, which leads to inefficient land-use patterns. Cities growing horizontally are struggling to deal with increasing urban populations and are not likely to be sustainable over the long term because of challenges with congestion, infrastructure, pollution and social disaggregation.

An increase in migration from rural to urban areas can exacerbate poverty and inequality as people pour into the cities in search of jobs and opportunities, straining available services such as water, transportation and garbage collection.

"Urbanization, particularly in the developing world, has been accompanied by increased levels of crime, violence, and lawlessness. Global studies show that 60% of all urban residents in developing countries have been victims of crime at least once over the past five years, 70% of them in Latin America and Africa," says UN-Habitat's website.

Women and children are often the most affected, especially when fear hinders their access to basic services in the city. Crime and insecurity in the city restrict urban social and economic development, and often jeopardize opportunities and policies that support the poor in urban areas.

Sustainable cities

The need for sustainable cities is particularly urgent, considering cities generate over 70% of global carbon emissions. The one billion slum dwellers worldwide suffer the impacts of air pollution from indoor cooking, proximity to traffic and industry, contaminated water and inadequate sanitation, among other environmental health risks.

UN-Habitat suggests a three-pronged approach to sustainable cities, based on effective and comprehensive urban legislation, proper urban planning and design, and adequate financing for projects. The three principles can be levers for the transformation of cities and human settlements into centres of environmental, economic and social sustainability.

Climate change is a recent consideration in the planning of sustainable cities. Africa's urban environments are particularly susceptible to flooding and outbreaks of diseases such as malaria. However, these can be mitigated through proper planning, effective policy implementation, the protection of ecologically sensitive areas, reforestation and the use of waste in energy generation, among other measures.

Given the economic and social challenges faced by many African cities, can they offer a high quality of life for residents through the provision of efficient basic services while at the same time ensuring that the environment is safe and clean?

Luanda, Angola. AMO/Rodger Bosch

"Yes, potentially," says Mr. Mbassi, adding that this would require a pace of development in Africa that should not necessarily resemble that of the West.

"We should plan cities according to their specific situations and the needs of the local people, to ensure that cities include everyone and the poor are not marginalized in terms of accessing all the services a city has to offer," Mr. Mbassi told *Africa Renewal* in an interview.

A new agenda

Working with the UN Economic Commission for Africa, UCLG-A developed the Africa Urban Agenda (AUA) to be adopted by African leaders in July 2016.

By 2030

Africa's GDP will reach $1.7 trillion from the current $700 billion

The Agenda consists of actions Africa needs to take to improve its cities and settlements and to promote urbanization as a catalyst for Africa's structural transformation. It represents Africa's inputs into the Global Urban Agenda to be adopted at Habitat III, a conference on housing and sustainable urban development to be hosted by UN-Habitat in October 2016 in Quito, Ecuador.

Countries attending Habitat III, the first UN world summit after the adoption of the SDGs and the Paris climate change agreement, are expected to adopt the "New Urban Agenda" for the 21st century.

It is clear that urban planning requires a shift from viewing urbanization mainly as a problem, to seeing it as a tool for development, UN-Habitat says in *UN-Habitat Global Activities Report 2015: Increasing Synergy for Greater National Ownership.*

At a meeting organized by UN-Habitat and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Ethiopia in March 2014, called "The Role of Urbanization in the Structural Transformation of Africa," the director of political affairs at the African Union Commission, Khabele Matlosa, said that African countries need to adopt new development models designed to take advantage of urbanization by facilitating structural transformation, creating jobs and addressing social inequality and poverty while creating habitable settlements with equal opportunities for all.

Starting smart to end slums

Although with good planning urbanization, industrialization, sustained economic growth and human development can be mutually reinforcing, there is urgent need for safe settlements too, according to a report by UN-Habitat, *The State of the African Cities 2014: Re-Imagining Sustainable Urbanization.*

Sub-Saharan Africa has a slum population of 199.5 million, which, according to UN-Habitat, is a sign of "a poorly planned and managed urban sector and, in particular, a malfunctioning housing sector."

Africa is home to big slums such as West Point in Liberia's capital, Monrovia, with more than 75,000 people, and Kenya's Kibera slum in Nairobi, which is the largest in Africa, with over 2 million people.

Africa requires around 4 million housing units per year, with over 60% of the demand required to accommodate urban residents. Effective planning regulations and their enforcement will help cities deal with the growth of informal settlements and provide a map for how the cities will grow and develop, while promoting economic growth.

Kigali sparkles on the hills

Rwandan government implements an ambitious development master plan

BY **BUSANI BAFANA**

An artist impression (in the background) of a forthcoming shopping and office complex in Kigali. Panos/Sven Torfinn

2015

Kigali was selected as one of six African cities out of 67 cities worldwide for the 100 Resilient Cities Initiative of the Rockefeller Foundation.

Rwanda's moniker, "land of a thousand hills," not only attests to the country's unique geography but also suggests the trajectory of Kigali through its many crises to become a model sustainable city.

Kigali is one of Africa's rising cities: it is clean and organised and, thanks to an ambitious national development plan, the city has become an ultramodern metropolis that boasts recognizable social, economic and environmental successes. It is a city under construction, in which new buildings are fast replacing outdated ones. Tarred, dual-carriage roads crisscross Kigali, providing a seamless connection between urban settlements and the fog-covered countryside uplands. The city is now a preferred destination for many organizers of international conferences.

It is easy to understand why Kigali sparkles. Among other impressive environmental measures, city government banned the importation of non-biodegradable plastics and designated a day each month for the residents to clean the city and spruce up the surroundings. It is difficult to find litter on Kigali streets.

In 2008, UN-Habitat awarded its Scroll of Honour to Kigali for its slum clearance and upgrading of urban amenities, particularly refuse collection and the provision of housing, water and sanitation.

As Rwanda's main business district and port of entry, Kigali is seen as an investment and economic hub in Africa. Already the city of more than a million people is one of Africa's information technology hubs, making it the country's economic growth engine.

Rebuilding after genocide

More than 20 years have passed since the Rwandan genocide that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, deprived the country of decades of development, destroyed infrastructure and crippled essential services. Kigali's transformation has benefitted from determined efforts to forge national unity and actualise a new vision for the country.

Rwanda's Vision 2020 is an ambitious development master plan that, when fully implemented, will lure international investors. The government intends to expand modern infrastructure and ensure the efficient

delivery of services for Kigali residents, including water, sanitation, energy and transportation.

Kigali has environmental and sustainability goals that include a vision for a safer, cleaner and more competitive modern city. With more than 70% of its population (the bulk of whom are under 30) living in informal settlements, and an annual growth rate of more than 4%, the city expects to increase investments in service delivery to meet the needs of a growing urban population.

Open for business

Kigali's official website highlights a plan to "bring forward the most cutting-edge ideas for city and infrastructure planning, based on the three prongs of sustainability: ecology, equity and economy. Sustainable management of land, water and biodiversity guided the development of the plan insofar as these elements are essential factors for integrated urban design."

As with other sustainable cities, planning is key. Kigali's well-thought-out master plan was formally adopted in October 2013, and guides development until 2040 through five-year development phases. The current phase (2013 to 2018) prioritises rapid and effective urban development through its administrative structure and financial hubs.

The "master plan takes into account the preservation of hillsides, forests and wetlands so that they may be available for future generations.... It uses the natural cycles to provide efficient infrastructure for water, drainage, water purification, biogas generation from waste and recycling," says the city's official website.

"We are developing the city in phases (short, medium and long term), with the first phase spanning 2013 to 2018, under which we are developing the Kigali Central Business District (CBD), which is the most attractive area of the city in terms of commercial activities," said city engineer Alphonse Nkurunziza, who coordinates the departments of urban planning and construction; infrastructure development; and master-plan inspection.

"This phase includes high-rise buildings and commercial complexes that match demand, as we want to decongest the CBD through eliminating unplanned commercial buildings," Mr. Nkurunziza told *Africa Renewal* in an interview.

Already new complexes are being developed that combine office space with residential apartments. Also, under the Kigali Urban Upgrading Program, informal settlements are being upgraded with the provision of services such as water, energy and roads, Mr. Nkurunziza said.

Sustainable design

Rwanda's national sustainability agenda includes plans to integrate urban and peri-urban horticulture into Kigali's development master plan. With guidance from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), authorities are promoting the growing of fresh fruits and vegetables within the city to increase urban food security and boost farmers' incomes. They envision a cosmopolitan city with green gardens.

The development of pedestrian and cycling corridors will be part of Kigali's public transit system, which will allow for cycling and walking, and will reduce car access to the CBD. The private sector, local government, nongovernmental organisations, civil society and investors are expected to support these efforts.

2040

the year Kigali is projected to become a city of affordable homes and green transport, ensuring reduced air pollution and congestion and conserving the city's environment

In 2015, Kigali was selected as one of six African cities out of 67 cities worldwide for the 100 Resilient Cities initiative of the Rockefeller Foundation. The initiative focuses on helping cities address urbanisation, climate change and globalisation challenges through infrastructure development that can cope with population growth. The provision of adequate water, sanitation and public health services is part of this initiative.

In addition, Colombia, Egypt, Mozambique, the Philippines and Rwanda were selected to host a pilot sustainable urban development programme, which implements a host of urban policies, including those pertaining to physical planning, economic integration, social and environmental sustainability, according to Aisa Kacyira, the deputy director of UN-Habitat.

"There is a need to make African cities liveable, functional and to serve as tools for peace-building in post-conflict countries like Angola, Rwanda and Mozambique," said Ms. Kacyira.

Challenges

Nevertheless, despite progress made so far, Kigali, and the whole country generally, faces some underdevelopment challenges, including a lack of adequate safe and clean water, sanitation, housing and transportation services for all. According to the NGO WaterAid, which is based in the United States, 3 million Rwandans have no access to a safe water supply and 5 million have no toilets. This has a huge impact on health and infant mortality in the country, with over 2,000 children dying every year from preventable diarrhoeal diseases.

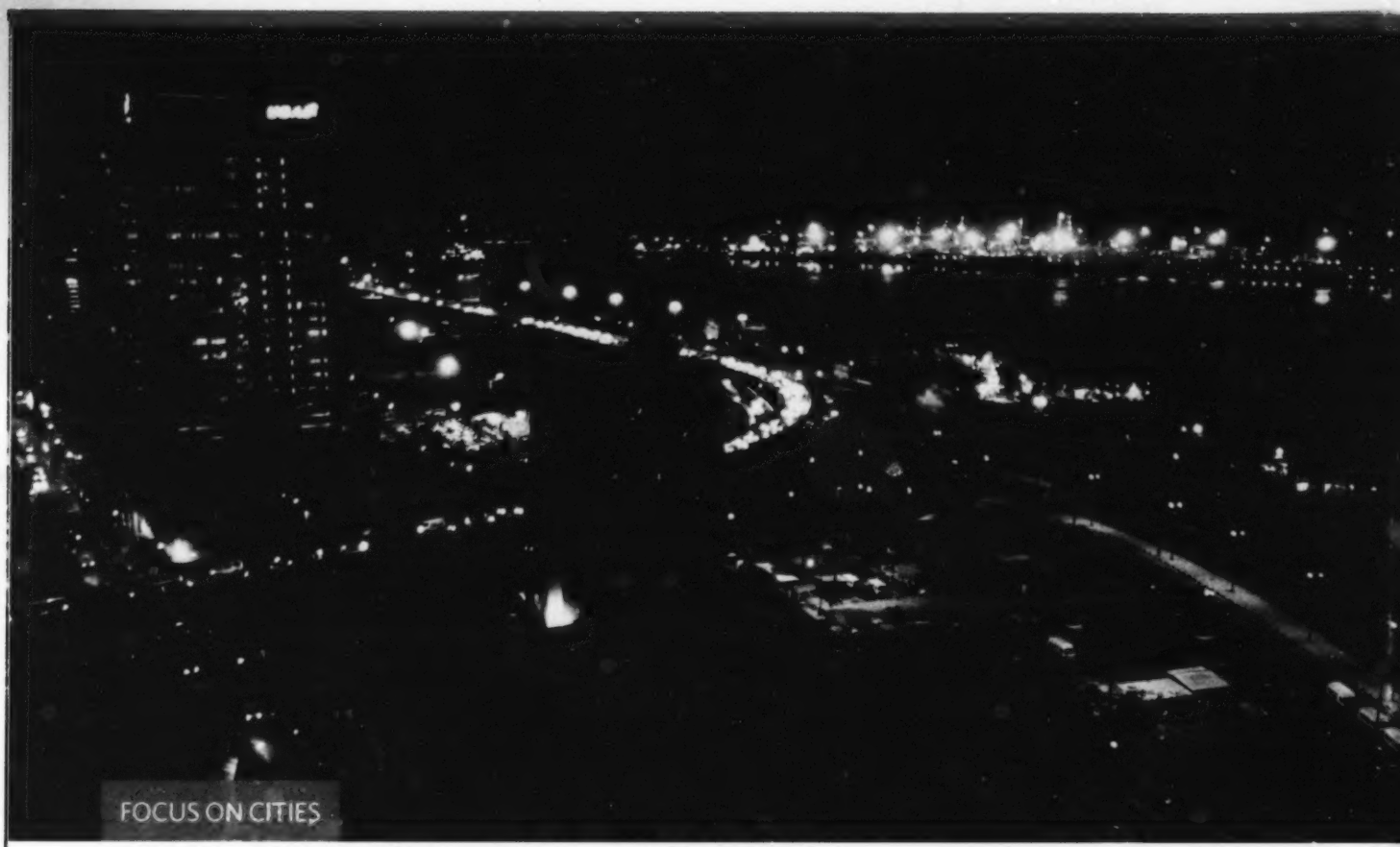
As to housing, according to a study done by the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Rwanda Housing Authority, and cited by the newspaper *The East African*, the country's total housing needs from 2012 to 2022 were estimated at about 460,000 units, of which more than 344,000 have yet to be constructed.

The study put the housing demand per annum at 60,000 units countrywide, with Kigali alone needing half of the number. However, it estimated the supply at only 1,000 units per year.

And in transportation, Rwanda has the highest transport costs in the region, estimated at 40% of the value of its imports or its exports, against 12% and 36% for Kenya and Uganda respectively, according to a review by the African Development Bank. The hope is that current efforts will soon begin to bear fruit.

"By 2040 we want to have Kigali as a city of affordable homes. We also want a city of green transport, ensuring we reduce air pollution and congestion and conserve the city's environment," says the city engineer.

For a city many already consider one of Africa's most beautiful, the future looks promising.



Lagos Island from Apogbon, overlooking Apapa Wharf. *Africa Media Online/Ademola Akinlabi*

CITIES ON THE MOVE

Lagos now wears a new look

City transforming from chaos of traffic congestion, rickety buses and pickpockets

BY **KINGSLEY IGHOBOR**

An oft-told tale of Lagos's once-notorious traffic jams is that of a taxi passenger stuck in a snarl-up who left the vehicle, wandered into a roadside restaurant to eat, drank a beer, took a nap and returned to the vehicle that had not moved an inch. He reached his destination several hours later.

First-time visitors to Lagos about 10 years ago were warned, "This is Lagos." That meant that you should not expect help from anyone — but brace up for hard times ahead.

Fast-forward to 2016 and the traffic congestion, high crime rate, clogged gutters and roads filled with garbage could soon become just a bad dream. These days Lagosians still regale each other with anecdotes of the dystopian city even as positive changes can be seen in Africa's most populous city, with 21 million people. These days the greeting "Welcome to Lagos" portends better news.

Transformation foundation

The transformation of Lagos started during the tenure of Bola Tinubu, Lagos State governor from 1999 to 2007. Mr. Tinubu set forth a rescue operation that his successor, Babatunde Fashola, later continued.

There were political and economic benefits for such efforts. "Lagos is Nigeria's richest state, producing about $90 billion a year in goods and services, making its economy bigger than that of most African countries, including Ghana and Kenya," notes the *Economist*.

A fast-growing population (600,000 people added annually), without commensurate improvements in social services such as housing, water and transportation, had pushed Lagos to the cliff's edge.

"Manhattan" rises offshore

There have been impressive infrastructural developments, but the plan to create a "new city" at the edge of Lagos is probably the most audacious. Dubbed the "Manhattan of Africa," Eko Atlantic on Victoria Island consists of 10 million square meters of land reclaimed from the ocean and protected by an 8.5 km seawall. Construction began in 2008, and it consists of seven districts along the oceanfront, including a business district that is expected to host major banks and

insurance and oil companies, as well as the Nigerian stock exchange, once construction is fully completed.

Lagos's government reduced crime rates by providing logistical support to the police force run by the federal government. It installed closed-circuit television in most parts of the city and established skills acquisition programmes for the "area boys"—youths, mostly jobless, who extort money from drivers and passengers. It also set up mobile courts to summarily try cases.

Oshodi market, located about five miles from Murtala Mohammed International Airport, used to represent the good, the bad and the ugly of Lagos: thousands of people to-ing and fro-ing; a cacophony of voices at the highest decibels; rickety buses meandering through a sea of human beings; pickpockets on the prowl; people fighting at one end, others dancing to loud music at the other end. Currently, most of what used to be Oshodi market has been demolished, to make way for a "world-class bus terminus," according to government officials.

"The place [Oshodi] was harbouring criminals and a number of untoward activities," said Steve Ayorinde, the current Lagos state commissioner for information and strategy, according to the Nigerian newspaper *Vanguard*. Mr. Fashola himself regards Oshodi's transformation as a watershed moment. During his tenure, he often reminded Lagosians that, having transformed Oshodi, there was nothing they couldn't achieve.

Lagos is becoming a clean city. Thousands of workers can be seen late every night sweeping the roads and taking away the dirt. An efficient garbage collection service supports the cleaning efforts. More than one million tons of waste was deposited in public landfills in 2015, up from 71,000 tons in 2004. About 72% of Lagos residents currently use a government-regulated waste disposal service; in 2005 only 42% used such a service.

Nigerians are generally in disbelief regarding the new Lagos. "This is not the Lagos I used to know," says Sanusi Turay, who manages a private security firm in the city. The new Lagos is a bit of an anomaly, Mr. Turay explains, with a tinge of sarcasm. "But, honestly, we are very happy things are changing for the better."

Just before Mr. Tinubu took over as governor in 1999, the BBC reported that "the realities of Lagos may thwart Mr. Tinubu's ambitious plans; the city is collapsing as fast as it grows, disappearing under a mountain of rubbish." But after 15 years of painstaking efforts, that image of Lagos is slowly changing.

Fashola's strategy

After Mr. Tinubu exited, Mr. Fashola's strategy was focused on three fronts. First, he solicited citizens' support for a new vision of Lagos. The slogan *Eko o ni baje* (Lagos must not spoil) rallied Lagosians against the status quo. Second, he reformed the tax system, which resulted in an increase in tax revenues to $115 million per month in 2015, up from $3.2 million in 1999. Tax compliance increased to 80%, up from about 30% in 2005. Third, Mr. Fashola used the tax revenues to undertake ambitious transportation and sanitation projects, including the creation of a rail network, bus lanes and a waste collection system, as well as massive road rehabilitation.

Under the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, Lagos transportation "became faster, safer, predictable, relatively cheaper and more comfortable," reported *Vanguard*. The BRT itself created jobs for 2,500 people. Most of Lagos' notoriously old and dangerous commercial buses, called *Molues*, were replaced by swanky new ones that use designated bus lanes. With support of private operators, the government procured about 1,300 taxicabs to run in the city.

In addition, an ambitious multibillion-dollar light rail project that began in 2010 is set to be completed by December of this year. The project consists of seven lines, which, on completion, will further ease Lagos city traffic.

The journey is not finished

Nowadays Mr. Fashola's efforts have won bipartisan praise, a phenomenon rarely seen in Nigeria. Nobel laureate and social critic Wole Soyinka says, "Fashola diagnoses the problems and goes at it like a skilled mechanic."

"There is no finish line in this journey," says Mr. Fashola, whose term expired in 2015 and who now oversees Nigeria's federal ministries of energy, works and housing. Both he and his predecessor Mr. Tinubu set a high bar. The jury is still out on the current governor Akinwunmi Ambode, who took the reins in May 2015. But for Lagos, the city of the late Afrobeat icon Fela Kuti and the city from which Africa's richest person, Aliko Dangote, manages his business empire, the mantra continues to be *Eko o ni baje* indeed.

Banana Island, Ikoyi, was reclaimed from the waters of Lagos Lagoon. Panos/George Osodi

INTERVIEW

Urbanization is a tool for development

— Joan Clos

Joan Clos is the Executive Director of the Nairobi-based United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). In this interview with **Newton Kanhema** for *Africa Renewal*, Dr. Clos talks about the effects of urbanization in Africa and the forthcoming Habitat III, a major UN conference on housing and sustainable urban development to be held in Quito, Ecuador, in October 2016. The following are excerpts:

Africa Renewal: What are the consequences of Africa's fast-growing urbanization, and should Africa control this phenomenon?

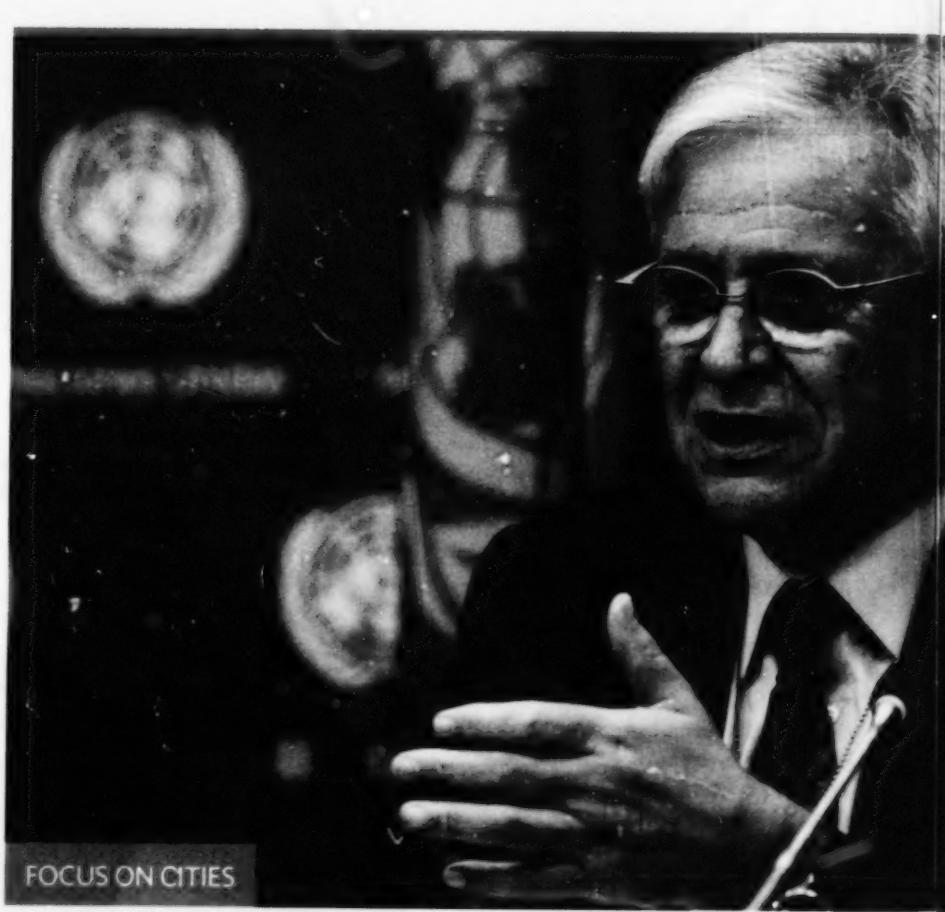
Joan Clos: The share of the population living in African urban areas now is about 30%, but will rise to 50% in a very short period of time. That will present several challenges in both governance and the capacity of cities or even national government to react. It's important to have a national urban policy which can be transformed into local initiatives. Urbanization is more of an opportunity than a challenge because it goes in parallel with development. If governments plan and design urbanization well, they will enjoy the benefits that urbanization brings to a society. Urbanization will be a big opportunity for Africa in the coming years.

So what you are saying is that urbanization can bring benefits?

Yes. In the way and pace that African societies are going, urbanization is a consequence of development and also the driving force for accelerating this development.

Many African governments tend to develop new megacities in order to decongest existing cities. Is this sustainable or a fire brigade solution?

Megacities tend not to be sustainable but they are good evolutions for economic prosperity if they are well planned. In fact, there are many big cities around the world that are much bigger than the megacities of Africa. Tokyo, for example, has more than 35 million people, compared to some of Africa's megacities that have around 10 to 12 million people. The question is not the size but the capacity of the cities to develop, not spontaneously but in a well-designed and well-planned manner. The problem is not the emergence of megacities, but the lack of planning. The challenge is how to transform megacities so they can be productive without accumulating the problems of unplanned urbanization.



FOCUS ON CITIES

Dr. Joan Clos is the Executive Director of the Nairobi-based United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-

What kind of support does UN-Habitat provide to national governments to develop environmentally sustainable human settlements?

We provide advice to member states on strategies that can be applied to urbanization to increase efficiency and productivity. This includes suggesting a national urban policy composed of three pillars.

The first pillar is rules and regulations; this is important because urbanization is about the rule of law. The second pillar is about the quality of urban design, and the third is financial planning. Urbanization is a costly exercise which requires a lot of resources.

New cities are springing up in Africa but so too are slums. What kind of policies should African governments adopt to address the proliferation of slums?

Slums are a natural consequence of spontaneous urbanization. In that sense they should be considered a temporary outcome of development. In order to prevent the slums, we need to accelerate development. Slums should be integrated in a much better manner with proper rights to housing. You cannot fight slums in an isolated manner. What you need is an integrated policy that addresses the livelihoods of people, such as employment, income, training and human capital. Authorities need to provide affordable houses for the middle class. It's a long and difficult process; there's no radical solution.

Habitat). UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

Are there best practices in the world that African countries can adopt? What can we learn from Kigali or Lagos?

Well, there is a lot of experience in and outside the region. There are no easy and quick solutions to urbanization because it is a process of transforming a society and it requires time. What is important is to approach the question with a good strategy and a midterm and long-term vision. And this is what we provide—a framework of ideas that address different problems that cities face. We are helping Kigali to introduce new concepts for city extension, well-planned urbanization, quality public spaces and a balance between public spaces and buildable plots. In Lagos we have a very interesting case of a big city that, although it's mentioned as one of the mega-capitals of Africa, has the capacity to initiate policies that can generate income, sustain domestic services and transform the wealth of its habitants. Lagos is a good example of the approach other African cities should adopt.

The major event on your calendar this year is Habitat III. How significant is this event for the African continent?

This is a very important meeting taking place in Quito, Ecuador, 20 years after Habitat II, which took place in Istanbul, Turkey. Habitat III will be a review of urbanization over the past two decades. It will also be the beginning of a process to implement agreed strategies on urbanization for the next 20 years. There is no doubt that urbanization is going to accelerate over the coming years and Africa will experience the most rapid pace in the world. I am happy that African leaders are mobilizing their governments for Habitat III, as they will be actively participating, engaging and deepening the debate on urbanization over the coming years.

What outcome can African leaders expect from Habitat III?

Habitat III would provide an important opportunity for African leaders to share experiences on transforming urbanization as a tool for development. Very often we approach urbanization as a problem of poverty, lack of services, etc., and not as an opportunity to accelerate the pace of development. Habitat III will align urbanization as a development tool with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Many African countries face huge urbanization problems. Without resources, how can such countries implement policies that provide for adequate human settlement?

The issue of financing urbanization is a very complex one but economists say the wealth that urbanization generates is much more than the cost of urbanizing. The question is how to share the wealth created by urbanization among all stakeholders. One of the tricky points that need to be addressed is that urbanization is not just building buildings, but finding a balance between the art and science of building cities and building buildings.

Are there elements of the recently signed Paris agreement on climate change that illuminate the work that you do?

Yes, climate change is important to urbanization. This is particularly so in the developed world, where cities are a source of greenhouse gas emissions. Yet the effects of climate change are most felt in the cities that do not have sufficient infrastructure. It's a complex equation that needs to be addressed globally. It means taking measures to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases and helping cities that suffer from the consequences to adapt to new conditions. In some parts of the world cities are the main emitters of greenhouse gases and in others cities suffer the worst from climate change.

Lastly, what is your message for Africa?

Africa has a huge opportunity to address the new challenges of urbanization. It's a wave and it's a process. They should devise strategies that focus on the capacity of urbanization to generate prosperity. The big question is how to direct this process, and with which objective and vision. I urge people in Africa and their governments to take urbanization as an opportunity and as a tool for development.

RECOVERING CITY

Abidjan regains it glamour

Spurred by Côte d'Ivoire's current economic growth, the city is turning a corner

BY **FRANCK KUWONU**

FOCUS ON CITIES

Aerial view of the district of Plateau in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. *UN Photo/Basile Zoma*

Lit by an elaborate display of orange lights, one of the three colours of Côte d'Ivoire's flag, the city of Abidjan ushered in 2016 with a spectacular fireworks display. For 25 minutes revellers in the commercial capital that calls itself the *"perle des lumières"* (pearl of lights) were treated to dazzling displays of colour in the sky above the Ebrié Lagoon.

On the lagoon shore, in the towering hotels along the shallow waters and in the Treichville Cultural Palace, some of the Ivorians *Africa Renewal* talked to were upbeat and hopeful for a good year ahead. The celebrations apparently captured the mood in the country and the official narrative is that Abidjan is now "back in business."

"Pheno-me-nal!" was how *Fraternité Matin*, the main daily newspaper in Abidjan, described the fireworks show. But beyond the fun and the dazzling fireworks, there are signs that Babi (as Abidjan residents affectionately call their city) is getting back its lustre and rebuilding its infrastructure in dozens of construction sites across the city.

The combined effects of an armed conflict, which began in 2002, and an intense post-election crisis in 2011 left much of the city infrastructure dilapidated. The swift completion in 2014 of a much-needed bridge on the Ebrié Lagoon was the first sign of the city's renewal. Construction of the bridge had been delayed for almost two decades.

Infrastructure renewal

Linking the north and the south of the city, the 1.5 km toll bridge saves commuters hours they would have spent in slow-moving traffic. In early January 2016, for example, after a holiday weekend, a rush-hour 17-km ride to the airport from the Deux-Plateaux area of Cocody took just 35 minutes; in the past such a distance during rush hour would have taken two hours or more.

The new Henri Konan Bédié Bridge, named after a former president, and its connecting bypass on the Valéry Giscard d'Estaing Boulevard in Marcory are other major infrastructural developments. New hotels under construction and old ones being rehabilitated are part of the city's urban renewal programme.

A growing number of foreign travellers are once again flocking to the city, attracted by the country's economic performance. In 2015 Côte d'Ivoire posted an economic growth rate of about 8%, according to the World Bank. The economy is forecast to maintain the same rate in 2016.

The African Development Bank's (AfDB) decision in 2013 to bring back its

headquarters from Tunis to Abidjan was considered one of the earliest signs of international institutions' renewed confidence in Côte d'Ivoire.

The AfDB, which helped finance the new bridge in Abidjan, along with the World Bank, the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID), the China Exim Bank and several French companies, has invested heavily in infrastructure financing, including for road rehabilitation and construction.

High-end retail

With the economic boom and the city's growing influx of expatriates, and a flourishing middle class with disposable income and a willingness to spend, the service industry, including restaurants and high-end retail shops, is picking up. In December 2015 a new 20,000-square-metre shopping mall opened in the southern neighbourhood. Named the PlaYce Marcory, the mall comprises 55 shops, in addition to a hypermarket and a food court. The shops include a Carrefour hypermarket, the first branch of the French retail and grocery group to be opened in sub-Saharan Africa, and branches of L'Occitane en Provence, an international skin care and fragrance retailer, and Brosway, an Italian jeweller.

"PlaYce represents something good for Africa. It shows that Africa has now entered the consumption market," trade minister Jean-Louis Billon said at the opening.

In its golden days during the 1980s and up to the early 1990s, Abidjan, with its towering skyline and surrounding lagoon, was often referred to as "the Paris of West Africa" and its business district "the Manhattan of West Africa" because it was considered one of the foremost African cities in terms of fashion, culture and the standard of living. To many, the opening of a shopping mall with European and American brands is proof that the city can now rival the trendiest world capitals in fashion and quality consumer goods.

"Let me tell you," Sonia Ngoyet told *Africa Renewal*, "the quality and taste of the burger or the hot dog at the food court is as good as the ones I've tasted in Europe. Having a Burger King here in Abidjan is just fantastic." Ms. Ngoyet and Christelle Amou, both salespersons at the Aseke Oro Jewellery store, one of the locally owned stores in the mall, said they were happy to be working at the mall.

To many, the opening of a shopping mall with European and American brands is proof that the city can now rival the trendiest world capitals in fashion and quality consumer goods.

Youth employment lags

Aly Diallo, a regional correspondent for the state-run *Fraternité Matin*, travelled from the countryside to spend the holidays with his family. He went window-shopping and ended up buying a few items from the French Carrefour hypermarket. But what he wanted most was to have his picture taken in the mall to show that he "was a part of history." After trying a few photo spots, he finally settled for a clothing store with a huge photo of the Eiffel Tower in the background. "A very fitting spot," he said, striking a pose. "The developed world has come to Babi and I need to show people that I was here."

Yet despite the festive New Year's celebrations, chronic problems of income inequality continue to fester. *Gbich*, a satirical and arguably the most popular news magazine in Abidjan, carried a headline: "Before we knew it, 2015 is over. Yet we have nothing to show for it." Not all Ivorians have shared in the nation's new wealth. "Some of us are left behind," Anselme Kouadio, a street hustler on Rue des Jardins in Cocody, complained. "Talks of bridges and roads being built don't fill the belly. Real jobs are what we need, so we also can enjoy what the city offers. But unfortunately, they are few and far between for young people like us."

Even the World Bank observed in 2015: "There are disparities in access to basic services, and gender disparities across wealth and urban-rural groups". It is estimated that only 57% of the Ivorian population had access to clean water and improved sanitation by 2009, far below the 81% target of the MDGs".

A recent World Bank report, "The Might of the Elephant — Benefitting from Strong Growth to Create Better Jobs," says about 9 out of 10 young graduates are still struggling to make a decent living.

Campaigning in 2010, "President Ouattara promised to create a million jobs for the youth," Kobri Borgia, the editor of the biweekly *La Tribune de l'Economie* told *Africa Renewal*. "Five years later, the jury is still out," he says.

Again in 2015, President Ouattara pledged to make youth employment a priority for his last mandate. While time will tell, Mr. Borgia asserts that "making sure the strong economic growth works for all, including providing employment, is key to Côte d'Ivoire's sustainable growth." The World Bank report came to the same conclusion.

President Alassane Ouattara visiting the PlaYce mall. *Reuters/Thierry Gouegnon*

INTERVIEW

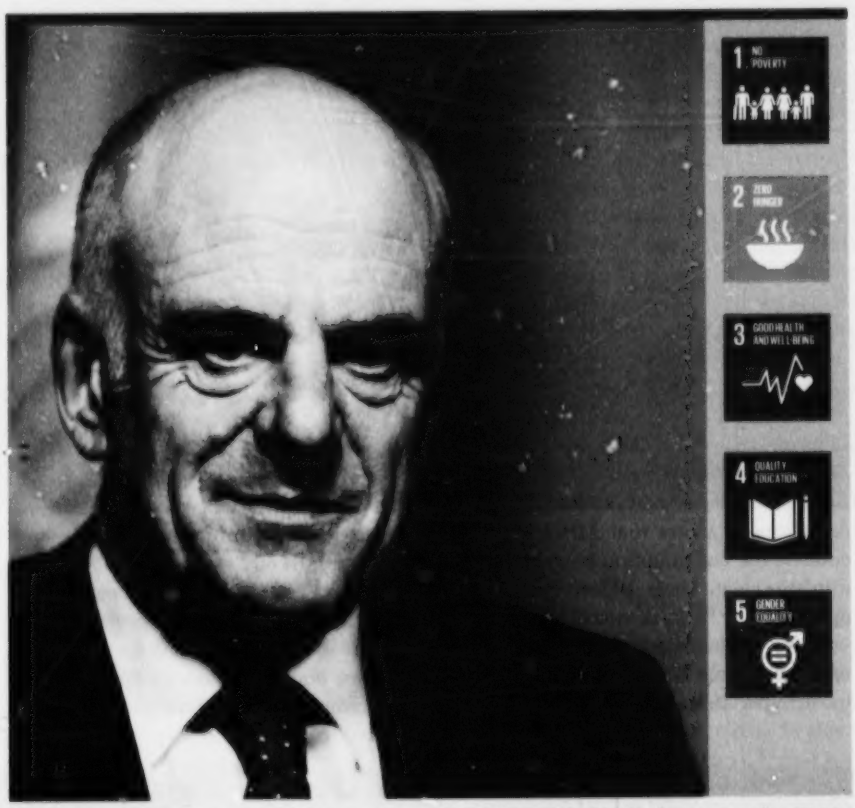
SDGs: No one will be left behind

— David Nabarro

David Nabarro is the new special adviser to United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on sustainable development goals (SDGs), a plan of action for ending poverty adopted by UN member states in September 2015 to replace the Millennium Development Goals. Dr. Nabarro will work with member states to implement SDGs by 2030. The following are excerpts of his interview with **Masimba Tafirenyika** for *Africa Renewal*.

Africa Renewal: Let me start with the significance of your appointment. This is probably one of your most challenging tasks. What came to your mind when you first heard about your new assignment?
David Nabarro: Well, the secretary-general telephoned me in December asking whether I would be ready to do this job. The first thing I thought was: I'm being asked to succeed Amina Mohammed who was an extraordinary, charismatic leader who helped the UN give birth to sustainable development goals. So it was an honour to be asked to do this job. It is a huge and daunting responsibility. At the same time, it's a job that is enormously important because the SDGs set out a plan for the future of the world's people and the planet. It's a tough job because I'm being asked to help the secretary-general to ensure that the ambitions of world leaders are properly fulfilled.

Your main task will be to work with member states and other stakeholders to implement the 2030 Agenda. What does this involve?
Most of the work to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is going to be done by the member states themselves—governments and the different institutions within countries. We're already seeing signs that countries are moving fast to get their national plans aligned with this agenda. They'll be supported by the UN and backed by a big movement of civil society, business, faith organizations, academic groups, the media and others. My job is to help the secretary-general keep an eye on who's doing what and where he can put his energy to try and advance the process.



David Nabarro, UN Secretary-General's special adviser on the sustainable development goals. 📷 *UN*

Who is responsible for implementing SDGs? Can governments be held accountable if they do not implement them?
The goals are owned by world leaders on behalf of their people. So in truth, the accountability is between national governments and their people, with the people having the right to expect that the goals will be addressed in their own countries and to demand this of their leaders.

It is estimated that trillions of dollars will be required over the next 15 years to finance SDGs. Where will this money come from and are you going to advocate for more resources for poor countries?
The SDGs apply to every country in the world. The concept that world leaders had when they developed these goals was that they would underlie every national development plan of all countries. That means existing spending by governments should

be adjusted to align to the SDGs. A lot of the money will come from existing national budgets. But of course extra money will be needed. Some of these goals are going to be expensive. But they will be needed particularly in poorer countries to help ensure that there are opportunities for everybody and nobody gets left behind. For that, development financing is critical, supplemented in some cases by private sector investment. To ensure that development funds are available, [donors] will be asked to maintain their assistance and not to reduce it because of domestic pressures. One of our jobs within the UN is to advocate for continued development assistance for poor countries.

Experts say some of the money needed to finance SDGs could come from curbing illicit financial flows. The 2030 agenda calls for reductions in illicit financial flows and the need to strengthen the recovery and the return of stolen assets. What are your views on this?

The most important requirement for governments is for fair and transparent systems to ensure money needed for the public sector benefits the people. This is the core set of principles underlying the SDGs. If, by any chance, [money is] moved from countries without proper accountability or if there is diversion of money [to avoid paying] taxes not just in poor countries, then this undermines the realization of SDGs. That's why proper use of tax revenue and proper use of government finance is absolutely key for the SDGs to be realized.

Are you concerned that the global fight against terrorism and extremism could pull resources away from funding SDGs?

When I talk to governments in countries affected by extremism and terrorism, I hear that they would like to have more resources to fulfil the SDGs so that younger people, particularly those that have received some education, do not find themselves being attracted to extremist behaviour. I see investment in the SDGs as an absolute prerequisite to reduce the risk of violent extremism.

One of the challenges that faced the MDGs was the absence of regular national performance reports. Are there plans to ensure citizens are informed through regular reports on the SDGs?

The 2030 Agenda is going to be regularly followed up and reviewed by all countries. This will be done through an annual mechanism called the High-Level Political Forum which will provide an opportunity for nations to explain what they have done on the SDGs. It's a transparent way so people can question the performance of their governments and seek to understand why certain activities might not have performed as well as they should have but also to appreciate areas which have performed well.

Many countries or regions have their own development plans. For example, the African Union has the Agenda 2063. How will the SDGs square up with these plans?

The SDGs were agreed to by all world leaders, and they knew already that there were some activities in their countries that directly reflected what's in the SDGs. The idea is not to completely redesign national plans but instead to align them with the SDGs. In some places that means leaving things as they are. In others, it means changing them so that they are better aligned.

Let's now talk about SDG targets. Who is involved in drawing them up? Are the targets the same for both rich and poor countries?

The SDGs targets are offered to countries to help them judge progress on achieving the goals. The indicators, which apply to each of the targets, are also available for countries to assess progress. The [process] is country-first, it's country-based, it's country-focused and country-centred. It's up to the countries to decide on the targets and indicators to use. It will not be for some external group to prescribe.

As the saying goes "If everything is important then nothing is." What would you consider to be the most important SDGs that African countries could prioritize?

I've worked in development for more than 40 years and I've seen the reality of life particularly for poor and vulnerable people. Their lives are interconnected. Issues in agriculture, in climate, in gender equity, in health and education tend to be linked in a very intense way. You can't take one area, one aspect of human existence and deal with it out of sync with another aspect. So I actually do believe that all the different issues identified in the SDGs are important and if you take one part out it is like taking a big stone out of the middle of the arch of the bridge; the whole of the bridge will fall down. I believe all of them are important.

What makes you optimistic that 15 years from now, for the most part, the world will attain the SDGs?

I am optimistic because I have seen the incredible capacity of people all over the world to come together around agreed objectives that improve human conditions and to work hard to achieve results. In the news we hear about situations where things are not good. But for every account of things going badly, there are thousands of accounts of things going well. They just don't get in the news. It's an optimism that makes me feel certain that people will come together and achieve the goals by putting special emphasis on climate change, on gender equity, on protracted crises, on human rights, and on financing for development.

Africa looks to its entrepreneurs

A useful strategy in the toolbox to reduce youth unemployment

BY **RAPHAEL OBONYO**

With a majority of African nations diversifying from traditional sources of income, entrepreneurship is increasingly seen as a key to economic growth. So far, entrepreneurship has yielded huge returns for entrepreneurs, and according to experts, there lies great untapped potential to drive the African continent into its next phase of development.

A study released in June 2015 by Approved Index, a UK-based business networking group, ranked Africa as among the top of the entrepreneurship chart. As a testimony of the continent's rising star, the *Entrepreneurship around the World* report listed Uganda, Angola, Cameroon and Botswana among the top ten on the entrepreneurship list. The group sees entrepreneurship as a 'necessity' at a time of high employment, saying: "When unemployment is high and the economy is weaker, people are forced to start small businesses to provide for themselves and their families."

Today, entrepreneurship is seen as one of the most sustainable job generation tools in Africa. Roselyn Vusia, a human rights advocate, points out that Uganda's youth unemployment estimated to be 83% according to the African Development Bank's 2014 report, is one of the highest in Africa.

Unemployment around the continent is also worrying. A 2013 study by Brookings Institution, a Washington DC-based think tank, found that African youth (15-24 years) constitute about 37% of the working age population. The same age group, however, accounts for about 60% of jobless people in Africa.

Kwame Owino of the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), a think tank based in Nairobi, says: "High youth population, poor policy choices and a lack of comprehensive employment plans in many African nations precipitate the high rates of unemployment."

Ms. Vusia comments on one proactive approach: "The government of Uganda has implemented an entrepreneurship strategy that is focused on skills development, resource provision and access to markets. This seems to be bearing fruit," she says.

The importance of entrepreneurship was underscored at the July 2015 Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) held in the Kenyan capital Nairobi, attended by US President Barack Obama, entrepreneurs from over 100 countries and a group of American investors, among others.

Speaking at the summit, President Obama lauded entrepreneurship for its promise for Africa with participants at the GES agreeing with him that entrepreneurship is one of the key ingredients in the toolbox to address youth unemployment in Africa, the region with the youngest population in the world.

"Entrepreneurship creates new jobs and new businesses, new ways to deliver basic services, new ways of seeing the world — it is the spark of prosperity," Mr. Obama told the summit.

According to Evans Wadongo, listed by *Forbes Africa* as one of the most promising young African entrepreneurs, many African governments have not been keen on developing policies that would avert unemployment among the youth in a big way.

"Governments are not doing enough. The private sector is trying, but most goods brought into the African market are from China. This denies the youth the much needed manufacturing jobs, which are more labour intensive," he says.

Success breeds success

Kenya's cabinet secretary in the Ministry of Industrialization and Enterprise Development, Adan Mohammed, however, defends the policies of most African governments, saying that their efforts have been spurring confidence in the continent

Scorpio R. Khoury, the 26-year old Rwandese, owner of fashion house 'Made in Kigali'.

Panos/Sven Torfinn

and are enabling more young people to turn toward entrepreneurship.

"Success breeds success – as many entrepreneurs make headway, others get on board. Also, technology-based inventions are pulling entrepreneurs," says Mr. Mohammed. "The mindset has changed and many young people now think as employers. Many African governments have created opportunities in terms of finance and access to markets."

Commenting on the increase in foreign investment and economic growth in Africa, Ugandan Prime Minister Ruhakana Rugunda said his government's efforts to promote entrepreneurial culture have produced "remarkable results." For instance, the state-run Youth Venture Capital Fund trains and provides money to young people with good business ideas. The government also helps young entrepreneurs to market their products.

Most importantly, with youth comprising more than 75% of its population, Uganda has remodeled its education system to include entrepreneurship as one of the subjects of instruction in secondary schools and colleges. Also, with the help of the private sector and development agencies, the government has established information, communication and technology innovation hubs which help entrepreneurs to launch successful startups.

Creating an enabling environment

In Kenya, Eric Kinoti, the group managing director at Safisana Home Services, a company that provides cleaning services, hopes the government will follow Uganda's example by creating an enabling environment to support entrepreneurship that could create jobs for youth.

"Many financial institutions in Kenya expect young people to provide collateral, yet only a few investors are ready to invest in young people's ideas," notes Mr. Kinoti, who mentors other young entrepreneurs and is listed among Forbes Top 30 under 30 in Africa.

Lack of access to working capital has hampered entrepreneurship in Kenya. Even though the government has created the Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF) and Uwezo Fund to support youth entrepreneurship, budgetary constraints limit their impact.

Steve Muthee, director of Daproim, a data processing company in Kenya. Panos/Sven Torfinn

"Entrepreneurship, if well managed, can create more jobs on the continent and increase the middle class which is essential in sustaining economic growth. There is need to integrate entrepreneurship training in formal education in Africa to prepare the youth for the future," says Mr. Wadongo.

In Cameroon, Olivia Mukami, the president and founder of Harambe-Cameroon, a social entrepreneurship organization, insists that Africa needs to prioritize youth unemployment: "African countries are sitting on a powder keg and if they don't change, it is going to explode".

> "When unemployment is high and the economy is weaker, people are forced to start small businesses to provide for themselves and their families.

Ms. Mukami says that in addition contributing to job creation, entrepreneurship can also help the continent to solve some of the social problems that undermine progress. "I am encouraged that the government of Cameroon has prioritized entrepreneurship as a key pillar of Cameroon Vision 2035," she said.

Andrew Wujung, a lecturer of Economics at University of Bamenda in Cameroon, attributes the country's entrepreneurship effort to its unique poverty reduction strategy. Unlike other countries in Africa, Cameroon's poverty alleviation strategy is linked to entrepreneurship. Moreover, the government is organizing robust skill acquisition and training programmes for entrepreneurs and making credit facility easily accessible to people with innovative technological and business ideas.

Facing challenges

For entrepreneurship to strongly impact Africa's economy, governments must tackle some of the greatest challenges that impede its progress, including lack of funds, relevant mentorship and poor government policies. In addition, African governments should consider giving the private sector incentives through tax relief to create more jobs. Laws and regulations should favour entrepreneurs.

Mr. Mohammed says Africa is on the right path. But to reap the fruits of entrepreneurship, effective strategies and policies are required to create more employment opportunities within small and medium enterprises.

Raphael Obonyo is Africa's representative to the World Bank's Global Coordination Body and a Ford Foundation fellow.

Mbeki panel ramps up war against illicit financial flows

Tax evasion by multinational companies, drug trafficking, smuggling, bribery and embezzlement are the main conduits

BY **KINGSLEY IGHOBOR**

Mr. Thabo Mbeki (middle) led a High-Level Panel on IF

On matters pertaining to Africa's socioeconomic and political development, former South African president Thabo Mbeki's voice, tempered by age and experience, continues to be heard.

Seven years since leaving office, Mr. Mbeki doesn't hide his impatience with Africa's failure to fulfill its great potential. At the moment Mr. Mbeki is leading a war against illicit financial flows (IFFs) from Africa, as the head of African Union's 10-member High-Level Panel on IFFs.

Africa is losing at least $50 billion annually to illegal transactions. Some reports suggest the continent may have lost up to $1 trillion in the past 50 years. Global Financial Integrity, a Washington, D.C based nonprofit research and advisory organization heavily involved in the IFF fight, lists the main channels for IFFs as: nefarious commercial activities of multinational companies, drug trafficking and smuggling, and bribery and embezzlement. Some companies also engage in over-invoicing or underpricing trade deals, transfer pricing (avoiding taxes by setting prices in trading between their divisions), offshore banking and the use of tax havens.

In view of the scale of IFFs from Africa, isn't Mr. Mbeki swimming against the current?

Shared interest

"Illicit financial flows are a challenge to us as Africans, but clearly the solution is global. We couldn't resolve this thing by just acting on our own as Africans," Mr. Mbeki began, in an interview with *Africa Renewal* in New York.

The former president has laid bare his sharp criticisms in a provocative foreword written for a report published in 2015 by his panel. "Africa is a net creditor to the rest of the world," he maintains, implying that illicit financial outflows from the continent far outstrip official development aid.

In February, Mr. Mbeki led his panel to the United States to promote its report and consequently raise global awareness about IFFs from Africa. A recurring theme in his speeches at the various forums in New York and Washington, D.C. was the urgent need to tackle these IFFs.

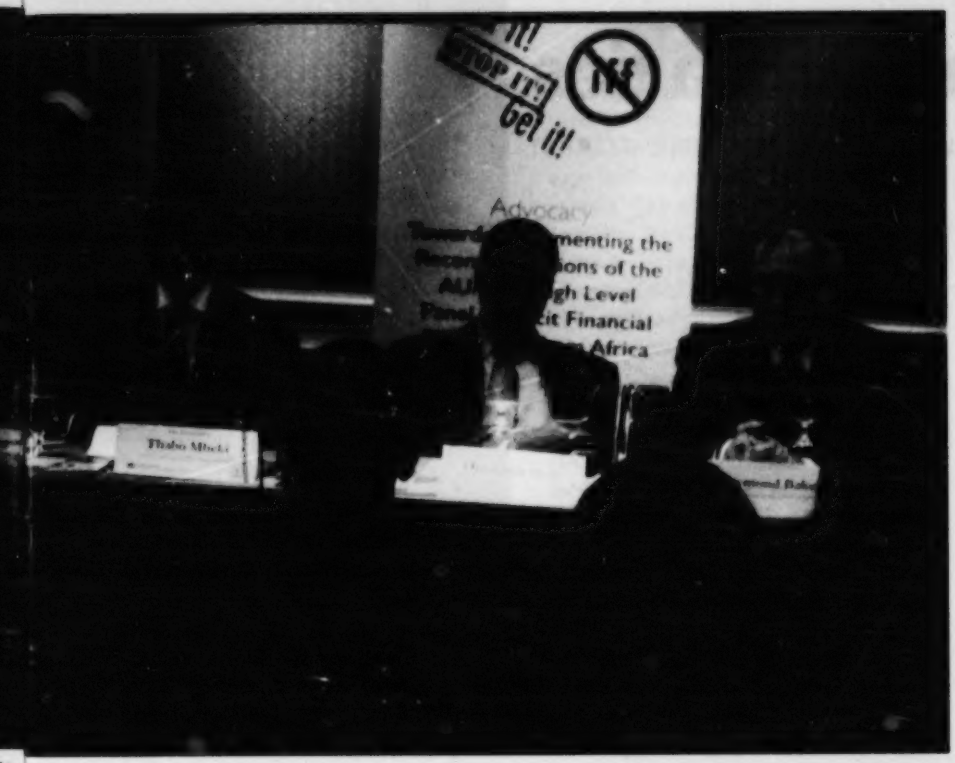
As billions are earned and extracted from the continent, more than 400 million Africans live on less than $1.25 a day (the threshold for absolute poverty), and the gross domestic product per person on the continent is just $2,000, which is a fifth of the global average, according to Mr. Mbeki's panel's report, titled *Track It! Stop It! Get It!*

His panel has twice met with officials of the US government (in 2014 and in 2016), including Vice President Joe Biden. "The US government gave us their own reports regarding what they are doing about tax issues, corruption, and domestic legislation. So we agreed to work together in a structured way to pursue these issues and work is going on."

> Africa is losing at least $50 billion annually to illegal transactions. Some reports suggest the continent may have lost up to $1 trillion in the past 50 years.

Is the West ready to cooperate with Africa to fight IFFs? "Yes," Mr. Mbeki responded, because "[cooperation] is of material relevance to the West; not so much that they have suddenly fallen in love with the Africans or the developing world, but because there is a shared interest between the developed and developing countries to deal with this matter."

In its advocacy for a global alliance to combat IFFs, the success of Mr. Mbeki's panel will depend on how effectively it can communicate that a victory concerning IFFs is potentially a win-win for everybody. The former president is upbeat about progress made in enlisting the support of international institutions such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Organisation for Economic



the United States. *Africa Renewal/Paddy Ilos*

Co-operation and Development (OECD) and so on.

In addition, "The G7 and the G20 have been discussing how to deal with the illicit financial flows because it is a matter of concern to everybody," Mr. Mbeki said.

Picking up the gauntlet

While in the United States, Mr. Mbeki and his team held talks with the World Bank and IMF in Washington, D.C. They met with United Nations officials in New York, including Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Earlier they had been in Paris, France, to meet with the OECD, and to the European Parliament in Brussels to engage with the World Customs Organization. The results of their outreach are impressive. The World Bank is currently preparing a programme of action on IFFs, the IMF has expressed its commitment to fighting IFFs, and the UN is ready to help.

"The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon indicated the commitment of the whole UN system, not just ECOSOC, to make sure that at various levels they have a practical focus on this matter," Mr. Mbeki confirmed.

The panel is soliciting global support, but Africans are also picking up the gauntlet, he said. "We have interacted with African civil society and there is a great enthusiasm to act on IFFs." He referred to the "Stop the Bleeding" campaign to end IFFs, led by Trust Africa Foundation, as an example of civil society's commitment to the cause. "It's not that the African continent is saying to the rest of the world, 'You do this about illicit financial flows.' What we are saying is, 'We as a whole have to act on this.'"

The former president said that Africa's customs authorities, the police, central banks, the banking system, and financial intelligence units must step up, although he did not deny that a lack of capacity in these institutions will inhibit overall efforts.

"The capacity of these institutions is insufficient. The action agenda that came out of the Financing for Development Conference in Addis Ababa [in July 2015] calls on the rest of the world to assist the African continent to deal with this capacity issue," he said, adding that tax information exchanged within the global financial system "may become of very little use without the capacity to process it."

Notwithstanding this insufficiency of capacity, African leaders are determined to confront IFFs, Mr. Mbeki said. The establishment of his panel demonstrates a political will. "We are convinced that there is a keenness on the part of the African governments to act on this matter."

How to safeguard recovered funds

An undeniable perception of corruption afflicts many governments and institutions in Africa. What would Mr. Mbeki say to critics who argue that monies tracked and recovered could be embezzled once back in Africa? "What drove this whole initiative was how to generate more resources to address development challenges," he argued. Given that his panel is expected to submit to the AU an annual report on IFFs, in the future such reports could include information regarding the use of recovered funds.

"Let's say that the continent is able to recover $25 billion. It would be natural to say that from that $25 billion, two bridges were constructed and 20,000 km of road were built," he says.

Mr. Mbeki's panel understands the enormity of the task ahead. Before the interview with *Africa Renewal* ended, he sought to highlight the relationship between IFFs and natural resources. "Natural resources are important sources of these illicit outflows. Remember that during the war in Liberia, illegal logging was one of the sources of funds to perpetuate the war. So the elected government hired an international firm to mark every log exported from Liberia and follow such a log until it is offloaded in Rotterdam [in Holland] or somewhere in Europe.

"It's more challenging with other resources. For example, a country that produces copper may refine it to a certain degree, not completely, and then export it to somewhere else for final processing," he said. "Such a country cannot know how much copper has been exported because it had not been completely processed locally. So we need a similar tracking system so that the country of origin knows exactly the quantity of exported copper."

Despite such difficulties, Mr. Mbeki's bottom-line message is that Africa cannot afford any further depletion of its resources through IFFs.

Boost in Japan-Africa ties

Japan is increasingly eager to support Africa's transformation

BY **KINGSLEY IGHOBOR**

Japan's senior vice-minister of agriculture, forestry and fisheries in Cameroon. *The Government of Japan*

To many Africans, Japan is a country acclaimed for economic and technological prowess. Johnson Obaluyi in Lagos, Nigeria, says Toyota, the ubiquitous automotive manufacturer, comes to mind whenever Japan is mentioned. For Kwesi Obeng, a Ghanaian living in Nairobi, Kenya, it is technology. Beageorge Cooper, a consultant for the World Bank in Monrovia, Liberia, says she thinks of Japan as "a former world economic power."

But it's a different matter when Africans are asked about Japan-Africa relations. "I will have to read up on that," says Ms. Cooper. "I think we are importing their Toyotas," recollects Mr. Obaluyi. "They support research into tropical diseases in Africa," says Mr. Obeng.

Such scant knowledge of the full gamut of Japan-Africa relations hardly reflects the true picture on the ground, considering that it was as recently as 2013 that Japan's prime minister Shinzō Abe announced a whopping $32 billion five-year support for Africa's development projects.

Before Mr. Abe's announcement, Japan's many interventions in Africa were mostly under the radar, attracting little fanfare. For example, not many know that Japan's cumulative foreign direct investment (FDI) in the continent rose from $758 million in 2000 to $10.5 billion in 2014, according to *Forbes*, a US publication. Indeed, Japan was Africa's largest Asian economic partner until 2000, when China took the lead.

A pioneering initiative

By launching in 1993 the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) with the United Nations Development Program and the UN's Office of the Special Advisor on Africa, Japan pioneered efforts by Asian countries to engage directly with African leaders. The Chinese followed in 2000 with the launch of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), while India joined the bandwagon in 2010 with the India-Africa Business Forum (IBF). Often attended by a majority of African leaders, as well as investors and development experts, these gatherings have been opportunities to negotiate international trade and to attract investors and official development aid (ODA).

Japan's decision to hold the sixth TICAD in Kenya in August, the first ever in Africa (previous conferences were all held in Japan), will likely stoke global interest in Japan-Africa relations. A prior visit to Africa by the prime minister in 2013 (with stops in Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia and Mozambique), the first by a Japanese leader since 2005 and the first ever to a francophone country, highlighted Africa's investment opportunities, particularly for Japanese companies.

The prime minister's visit also triggered a scrutiny of Japan's strategic intent and its policy towards Africa, with Stratfor, a US-based geopolitical intelligence firm, explaining that Japan is making investment forays into Africa because it is experiencing "resource insecurities" even as its "economic growth challenges have become more urgent after the 2011 disasters and nuclear shutdown."

$10.5 billion

The amount Japan's cumulative foreign direct investment in the continent reached in 2014

Attracting suitors

Africa's untapped resources and its resilient economy are a powerful magnet for investors. The continent's GDP growth averaged 5% in the past decade, according to the World Bank, while its economy was resilient against the global financial crisis of 2007–2008. This prompted Prime Minister Abe to express the view that Africa is "no longer an aid recipient but rather a partner for growth."

Increasing investor confidence has led to a quadrupling of cumulative FDI since 2000 to about $470 billion. In short, Africa seems like a beautiful maiden attracting the attention of investment suitors worldwide.

All the same, a feeling exists that Africa's economic growth has also forced a subtle change in the international rules of engagement. *Forbes* notes that China and India now concentrate on the construction of roads, bridges, railways and other commercial activities, rather than offering only ODA, as was the case in the past. The rationale is that infrastructure projects, often commissioned with fanfare, can be touted as evidence of constructive relations.

Unlike China's and India's, the majority of Japan's flows to Africa continue to be "focused on development assistance rather than on commercial investment by Japan's private sector," notes Harry G. Broadman, director of US-based Johns Hopkins University's Council on Global Enterprise and Emerging Markets in Baltimore, Maryland.

Japan's competitive advantage

In Mozambique, Mr. Abe announced a $570 million ODA to develop the Nacala corridor region that stretches from northern Mozambique to Malawi. The project will include roads rehabilitation in Malawi and the establishment of a single border post between Malawi and Mozambique, and another between Malawi and Zambia.

ish eries Taku Eto tries out a Japanese-made tilling machine in

Due to the volatility in commodity prices, Africa's developing economies need Japan's support, says Stratfor. However, while projects such as the one in the Nacala corridor may be worthwhile, "It is illustrative of Japan maintaining a traditional aid-for-Africa approach," argues Mr. Broadman.

Mr. Broadman's critique is dismissive of Japan's somewhat new pragmatic approach to its relations with Africa. Japan's Foreign Ministry notes that its prime minister wants Africa to "choose Japan as its true partner" because Africa needs "Japanese assistance and the organizational culture of Japanese companies which value human resources and place importance on creative ingenuity."

Japan's competitive advantage is its high-quality products, concurs Mr. Broadman, and Africa can gain in areas such as transport, power generation and distribution and the manufacturing of construction equipment and machinery. He adds that Japanese firms are "notable for sharing know-how and technology transfer."

While addressing the African Union in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Mr. Abe recalled that one of the African leaders told him, "Only the Japanese companies teach us the morals of what it means to work and what the joy of labour is." The leader said further, "Japanese companies that come to Africa never fail to bring with them this type of managerial philosophy." This philosophy, he further explained, means that "companies seek to elicit ingenuity by enhancing the competency of each individual."

Mr. Abe's pitch reiterates Japan's eagerness to support Africa's transformation through quality projects and transfer of knowledge. His speeches indicated a strategy consisting of a mix of ODA and empowerment. The African Business Education Initiative for Youth, which offers opportunities for Africans to undertake graduate studies in 58 Japanese universities, is one of Japan's human resource development programmes for Africans. The first batch of 156 African students began their degree programmes in September 2015. "We want to utilize our huge and excellent technology to support African countries to transform," Mr. Abe said in the margins of the UN General Assembly debate in New York in September.

Relations between Africa and Japan cannot be one-way traffic, says Mr. Broadman, meaning that opportunities exist for both. The plunge in the price of oil ($26 a barrel as of mid-February) and other commodities and the slowdown of the Chinese economy may stem FDI flows to Africa, offering Japanese companies much-needed space to operate. "Japan would certainly benefit from increased access to African oil," suggests Mr. Broadman. And rather than buying copper from Latin America, Japan may now opt for Zambian copper.

About 20 top Japanese business executives accompanied the prime minister on his visit to Africa. "Japan, with economic rival China in mind, is looking for new overseas markets where it can sell its cars, power plants and generators and buy fuels and other raw materials," writes the *Wall Street Journal*, a US daily.

Beyond the economy

Meanwhile, hundreds of Japanese peacekeepers are in Juba, South Sudan, providing critical engineering and logistical support to United Nations peacekeeping operations. Japan's help in airlifting equipment and supplies to South Sudan and Entebbe in Uganda, where the UN has a logistics hub, is viewed as critical to peacekeeping operations. The Asian giant is also actively coordinating with Ethiopia and other regional players to end hostilities in South Sudan.

In addition, Japan plans to support conflict resolution and disaster mitigation efforts in Africa with $320 million. This includes $25 million to facilitate the peaceful resolution of the South Sudanese crisis. "Japan believes mediation from neighbouring states such as Ethiopia is vital and should be supported," Mr. Abe said during his visit to Ethiopia.

Cultural and sporting ties are also being strengthened. Ahead of the 2020 Olympics, Japan is conducting a "Sports for Tomorrow" programme and enlisting the participation of African youths.

> Japan, with economic rival China in mind, is looking for new overseas markets where it can sell its cars, power plants and generators and buy fuels and other raw materials.

Tsuneo Kitamura, the parliamentary vice president at the ministry of economy and trade, admits Japan is cautious in its approach to foreign investments. The *Mail and Guardian*, a South African publication, quotes Mr. Kitamura as saying, "Japanese companies take time to decide where to invest, but they never give up in the middle." Christophe Akagha Mba, Gabon's mining minister, says that while the Chinese are taking advantage of falling commodity prices, "The Japanese are still at the same stage. They have not even started significant investments yet," reports *Reuters*, a news service.

As Japan and Africa prepare for the sixth TICAD summit, Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta says Africa will use the occasion to "showcase our own growth initiatives and expose to Japan the available opportunities for cooperation, trade and investment."

If Japan can help accelerate Africa's transformation, as Mr. Abe has promised, perhaps more Africans may soon have a better-than-peripheral knowledge of Japan-Africa relations.

Bamboo: Africa's untapped potential

The new economic force is generating income, creating jobs and protecting the environment

BY **ZIPPORAH MUSAU**

It is a "wonder plant" that is uniquely blessed. Agronomists in Africa believe it can restore degraded landscapes while economists think it is a potential "green gold," and a silver bullet for design and architecture that is already attracting a global market.

Bamboo—the highly versatile giant grass that can grow in almost any kind of climate and thrive in the poorest of soils—has been in existence for hundreds of years in Asia, Latin America and parts of Africa. Yet for a long time the potential of this fastest-growing plant on earth, with recorded growth rates of up to one metre per day for some species, remained largely unexploited.

It was not until recently that widespread commercialization of bamboo began taking root, spurring hopes of generating income and creating jobs for the rural poor.

The world bamboo market is growing, led by China and an increasing demand for sustainable products in Europe and the United States. According to the International Network of Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR), an intergovernmental organization registered with the United Nations that promotes the growing of bamboo and rattan for economic and environmental gains, the global bamboo economy is now valued at $60 billion, and is a potential income generator for rural communities.

To tap into this lucrative green economy, African governments and the private sector have begun positioning themselves to commercialize bamboo. The profit potential has become even greater as environmentalists link bamboo with climate change mitigation, and the possibility of increased income through carbon credits.

So far 18 African countries with natural bamboo—Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Kenya, Malawi, Madagascar, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Togo, and Uganda—have joined INBAR, which is assisting them with bamboo information, technology transfer, capacity building and policy formulation. Other countries, like Angola, Gabon and Zambia, are expected to join the network.

Bamboo products: Houses, furniture, lamp shades and a bicycle. *INBAR/Lou Yiping*

According to INBAR's director general, Hans Friederich, bamboo can be a strong pillar of Africa's future green economy. He says it can help reduce poverty and protect the environment, and that it provides a practical and rapid solution for some of the natural resource and poverty challenges facing many African countries today.

"It is an amazing plant that provides a great opportunity for making an income because it grows incredibly fast and a farmer can sell it as a raw product or can make products out of it," Mr. Friederich told *Africa Renewal*. "It also does not require any fertilizers or pesticides because it has no real threat from diseases or pests. Once it is planted, you can leave it."

Bamboo is used to make a long list of high-value products. In fact, according to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the plant has over 2,000 different uses, China reckons there are nearly 10,000 uses and can fetch even more money if processed.

Commercially bamboo is used for furniture and a variety of building and roofing materials, from fencing poles to veneer, floor tiles, panels for walls and ceilings, scaffolding material, door and window frames and window blinders.

In the paper and pulp industry, bamboo can be made into newsprint, toilet paper and cardboard, which would help to conserve Africa's finite resources, such as its forests. The textile, food and chemical industries convert bamboo into fabrics, T-shirts, wine, vinegar, biochemicals and pharmaceuticals.

Domestically bamboo is used to make mats, baskets, canoes, fishing kits, bicycles, fences, toothpicks, school desks, pencils and rulers, to name just a few products.

Bamboo is also a source of bio-energy. A majority of sub-Saharan African households use firewood or charcoal made from timber for cooking, often leading to deforestation, land degradation and indoor pollution. As the population in Africa increases, the massive harvesting of firewood and charcoal will be unsustainable, according to INBAR. Bamboo provides a clean and renewable energy alternative in the form of charcoal briquettes and wood for domestic and industrial use.

On protecting the environment, some swear the bamboo plant is "magic" in mitigating the effects of climate change through rapid reforestation, slowing soil erosion and

repairing damaged ecosystems. Bamboo also serves as an excellent large-scale carbon sink, each plant taking in almost double the carbon dioxide of a tree.

Commercial bamboo farmers may also benefit from acquiring carbon credits. INBAR, the China Green Carbon Foundation and Zhejiang Agriculture and Forestry University have developed a methodology that will enable project developers to quantify the carbon fluxes within a bamboo plantation, which can allow the calculation of carbon credits earned. This would mean more income for bamboo farmers.

Commercial bamboo farming has the potential to create thousands of jobs, since it is labour intensive. Bamboo plants are typically planted, maintained and harvested by hand. In Ghana, about 1,500 people were employed when a commercial project started recently. In China, the bamboo industry employs nearly 8 million people, a number that is expected to hit 10 million by 2020, according to INBAR.

A bamboo plant matures in four to eight years, depending on the species; however, it can be harvested as a perennial crop, without deforestation, three to five years after initial planting. It can be sustainably harvested for well over 40 years. Once it starts growing, bamboo remains rooted in the soil, producing new shoots each year. This helps secure the soil and maintain slope stability.

"Unlike forests, where everyone says, 'Don't cut that tree,' bamboo grows back fast when you cut it. The more you cut, the more it grows," says Mr. Friederich. Africa, he says, boasts huge reserves of largely untapped indigenous bamboo, amounting to some 8% of the world's bamboo resources, and excellent weather conditions for growing commercial species.

Challenges

That bamboo is versatile and has lots of potential is not in doubt. So why have African countries overlooked the plant's potential for so long?

"The biggest challenge is a lack of awareness," Tesfaye Hunde, the head of the East Africa Regional Office of INBAR in Addis Ababa, told Africa Renewal, adding that lack of finances and the absence of a national policy and strategy programme to develop and use bamboo resources were also hampering progress.

A farmer measuring the thickness of a bamboo tree in Madagascar. INBAR/Lou Yiping

As awareness grows, more countries are turning to bamboo. "The use of bamboo is dramatically increasing," says Mr. Hunde, adding: "Up to 36 countries in Africa have natural bamboo-growing regions and INBAR is working with other organizations on bamboo technology transfer and training farmers in the region developing a bamboo value chain—from farmers to markets—requires national policies, technology transfer and investment".

African governments also face the challenges of equipping farmers with bamboo planting and maintenance skills, supplying seedlings and teaming up with the private sector for processing and value addition.

Moreover, despite promising market potential, those who wish to commercialize bamboo products still face hurdles such as a lack of research, product innovation and marketing skills. Another challenge is to accurately designate bamboo to meet international trade and forestry standards.

"Bamboo shows big potential but suffers from an image problem," Gary Quince, the European Union's ambassador to the African Union, was quoted as saying. "Many farmers see it as a pest because it grows fast when in fact this is its real benefit."

The question is whether bamboo species are invasive, considering their characteristics, such as rapid growth. There is fear about bamboo's ability to displace native vegetation, alter habitat and upset food chains. A statement by the American Bamboo Society says the plant has a low potential for invasiveness but recognizes that some running bamboo species can be aggressive spreaders if not well maintained. INBAR is providing its member states with information on the issue, such as what species are best for different soils and how to maintain, intercrop and harvest bamboo plants.

Other organizations such as WWF, GIZ and SNV, and UNEP, FAO, UNDP, NEPAD and ICRAF are also showing interests in bamboo, mostly through South-South cooperation, according to Mr. Friederich. Already China and The Netherlands have agreed to fund a joint project in Africa. INBAR is currently talking to the European Commission, the Canadian government, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the City Foundation about possible collaboration.

To fully benefit from the bamboo boom, the private sector needs to be at the heart of green economy development in order to drive demand and provide investment. Again, value addition needs to be more innovative if African bamboo is to take the global market by storm.

However, there are those on the continent calling for proper planning before going full blast on bamboo. Nigerian environmentalist Nnimmo Bassey sees a unique problem: "Bamboo, which is normally a free resource throughout rural Africa, could fall into private hands that would deny villagers access and use of this resource."

Bamboo taking root in Africa

BY **ZIPPORAH MUSAU**

Kenya: A trove of green opportunities

Bamboo, nicknamed the wonder plant, is the strongest and fastest-growing woody plant on earth, and supplies a global trade worth an estimated US$2 billion per year. The lion's share is earned by Asian countries, whose bamboo-based industries span a vast range from paper making and scaffolding to luxury flooring and foods. But Africa is also witnessing a boom in bamboo.

In African countries that produce bamboo, research and development is usually the work of the forestry or agricultural sectors. However, scaling up requires expertise in specialized areas — such as micro-enterprise development, small-scale or industrial bamboo growing, and production of bamboo products — that might be better found in the private sector.

In Kenya, the bamboo industry involves a multi-stakeholder approach, with consultations among relevant government ministries, NGOs, research institutes and universities and others, facilitated by the Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI).

One of the largest stakeholders to take up bamboo development so far is Green Pot Enterprises, launched in 2014 to promote bamboo farming in Kenya and to help the country maximize the commercialization of bamboo.

So far the organization has farmers covering over 1,000 acres of land in Narok County, with another 2,000 acres to be planted this year. It is targeting 4,000 acres by the end of 2016.

Green Pot has two principal development plans. With a "gated community of forests," the organization buys a large parcel of land then subdivides it into 10-acre and 2-acre plots for lease by Kenyans at "affordable rates," according to its website.

Each buyer gets a title deed (the bamboo farm is managed as one whole unit despite the multiple owners) and a 30-year sublease. The company plants and fully maintains the forests and markets the produce once it is ready.

A parallel community outreach programme ensures that for every acre of bamboo planted in the gated communities programme, a corresponding acre is planted by members of the local community. This programme finances the supply of seedlings, Green Pot explains.

"Globally, there is a big push for bamboo because of its immense financial and environmental benefits. It brings wealth to the people, cleans rivers, stops soil erosion, and so on," Green Pot's chief executive officer, Caroline Kariuki, told *Africa Renewal*. She says the gated communities programme is mainly in Narok County, but the outreach campaign is active in more than 10 counties across the country.

For Kenya, Green Pot selected three main varieties of bamboo—moso, giant bamboo and *Dendrocalamus membranaceus*—because they are highly suitable for the chosen areas and have more economic viability than other varieties.

"When we began the project, we did a strategic plan to ensure we have a ready market for our growers. We are building factories with three main areas of focus: construction materials such as flooring, block boards and veneer; bamboo textile products; and bamboo energy products ranging from generation of electricity to briquettes for mass domestic use," said Ms. Kariuki. "Considering that more than 70% of Kenyans use wood and wood-based products as their main source of fuel, this is a massive market."

The group has partnerships with county governments, NGOs, government agencies and even local universities and is now seeking partnerships with climate change–focused funds for the rehabilitation of the Mara River and Njoro River.

"We are keen to establish partnerships with strong technology expertise and key buyers of our products to ensure that we are on track to deliver the promise to our customers upon maturity of our bamboo in four years' time," said Ms. Kariuki, who is also the finance/administrative director of the Open Society Initiative for East Africa. ●

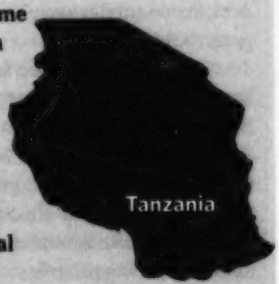
Tanzania: New income for 5,000 rural women

Bamboo has been increasing in importance as a non-timber forest product in Tanzania over the last two decades, according to INBAR. Locally bamboo is sought for handicrafts, residential fencing, flower farming, farm props for banana plantations, furniture and other minor cottage industry products like basketry and toothpicks.

Almost all the bamboo products made in the country are used domestically. Bamboo farms should be established to ensure a sustainable supply for the handicraft, construction and horticultural industries, among others.

INBAR, in partnership with the International Fund for Agricultural Development, helped establish 100 bamboo nurseries and set up micro-enterprises, and trained 1,000 locals in a specially created Bamboo Training Center.

Today some 5,000 women in these rural communities produce crafts and desks for local schools and sell charcoal briquettes. ●



Ethiopia: The potential of bamboo as a strategic crop

With about 1 million hectares of indigenous bamboo, Ethiopia is the biggest bamboo grower in Africa. It is home to 67% of all African bamboo.

The country has two species—*Yushania alpina*, planted and managed by farmers in the highlands, and *Oxytenanthera abyssinica*, which grows naturally in the lowlands.

Despite the size of its natural bamboo forest, Ethiopia has only recently started to tap its potential and is now eager to embrace bamboo technologies and knowledge transfer, mostly from INBAR and a range of Chinese experts.

"Bamboo should be considered the most important, fast-growing, strategic intervention for afforestation and deforestation in the mountainous and degraded areas of the country," said Ethiopia's state minister for agriculture, Ato Sileshi Getahun, at a recent event.

In Ethiopia bamboo is being used for protecting watersheds, for intercropping, to create shade for other crops, as a windbreak and as a natural mulch to provide drought protection. People also use it for fuel, fencing and furniture, and sometimes bamboo shoots are used for food and animal fodder.

However, bamboo value-addition in the country is still relatively small, hence limited export earnings.

The country has three factories and the sector employs more than 1,000 people. ●

Ghana: Once ignored, now big business

Ghana currently has about 400,000 hectares of bamboo, a mostly natural stand in the western region. Some exotic species have been introduced into Ghana, including the thick-walled Beema bamboo from India, and the near-solid *Oxytenanthera abyssinica* from Ethiopia. These two are particularly useful for biomass energy and are well adapted to drier areas.

According to Michael Kwaku, director of INBAR (International Network for Bamboo and Rattan) Ghana, 18 species of exotic bamboo were first introduced into the country from Hawaii in 2004 by the Ghanaian branch of the Bamboo and Rattan Development Programme (BARADEP), as part of a project with the Opportunities Industrialization Centre. The project was also extended to neighbouring Togo.

BARADEP-Ghana distributed the species to some institutions and nongovernmental organizations, which propagated them and monitored their growth conditions and adaptability in Ghana. It aims to provide adequate planting materials for private and commercial bamboo plantation developers in Ghana.

"Until recently, bamboo was a noncommercial open-access resource in Ghana. Over the past few years, the usefulness of bamboo and its commercial value is being appreciated. Commercial exploitation has begun for such products like bamboo bicycles, bamboo charcoal, furniture, bamboo boards and building support poles," Mr. Kwaku told *Africa Renewal*. Bamboo is also being used to restore degraded mining areas.

Challenges to commercialization

Challenges to the development of commercial bamboo planting include the slow pace of state uptake and support as the sector is still young and financial institutions are reluctant to grant credit facilities, including loans. The micro-enterprises are still considered poorly organized, according to Mr. Kwaku, which makes receiving support from stakeholders difficult. The skills and technology gap is a challenge.

INBAR is helping in western Africa with an awareness campaign about the economic potential of bamboo and about forming partnerships with governments. Currently eight member countries in West and Central Africa have conducted training workshops and educational tours to China to acquire firsthand experience of the bamboo economy.

"Bamboo is a big plus for building green economies. It is the promise of earnings at the household level that will attract the most interest across the population," said Nii Osah Mills, Ghana's minister for lands and natural resources, at a recent INBAR event. ●

Zambia: Innovation at its best

In Zambia, a local company, Zambikes, is producing bamboo bikes, bike trailers for transporting agricultural goods, and innovative bike-drawn "Zambulances" to be used at clinics around the capital, Lusaka.

Looking Ahead

Bamboo's untapped potential to restore degraded lands and forests, store carbon and supply energy to millions of rural communities is immense.

In addition to its prospects for manufacture, bamboo can make a major contribution to reducing carbon emissions, the article said. In China alone, the plant is projected to store more than one million tons of carbon by 2050.

Despite bamboo's potential, Dr. Hans Friederich, INBAR director general, says many decision makers, planners and national sustainable development action plans have not yet taken into account this resource and the benefits it can bring to society.

"Properly applied, bamboo will help many low- and middle-income countries achieve their sustainable development goals," says Friederich. ●

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addresses a summit of local leaders at the climate change conference in Paris. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

SEIZING THE MOMENT:

The Paris climate deal and Africa

BY **RICHARD MUNANG** AND **ROBERT MGENDI**

Africa's development and climate change experts are confident that the historic Paris Agreement on Climate Change that was unanimously adopted last December in Paris will be a win for the continent. At the Paris summit, 195 countries agreed to cut greenhouse gas emissions and enhance adaptation in a way that will keep global temperature increase to "well below 2° C" and, more optimistically, to attempt to limit it to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

For Africa, the sweet spot in the deal is an agreement to allocate money to the adaptation and climate mitigation needs of developing countries. African negotiators had urged rich countries to build on the promise by developed countries to ramp up climate financing by $100 billion by 2020 for developing countries, in line with the 2012 Cancún commitment. They got their wish, plus more, because the Paris deal stipulates that the $100 billion commitment will be revised upward from 2025.

According to the deal, however, while the rich countries will dig deeper into their pockets, developing countries are required to make some contribution too. The second *Africa Adaptation Gap Report* of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) says African countries must raise up to $3 billion per year between 2016 and 2020. To ensure transparency, the climate deal calls for prospective financing information to be communicated every two years.

Prior to the Paris Conference, 189 countries — including every African country, submitted a national climate plan, known as the Intended Nationally Determined Contribution, that spells out what they will do to address climate change, and what they will further do if financing is available. In Paris, countries agreed that they will submit updated plans every five years which will detail ongoing activities and efforts to achieve the goals in the Paris Agreement. Each plan is expected to be more ambitious than the preceding one.

Considering Africa's comparably negligible emissions over the years, while climate change will impact Africa more than many other continents, the Paris Agreement's adaptation financing plan and its strong review mechanism convey powerful statements of intent. The goal is for African countries to tap existing opportunities in adaptation and mitigation and to consequently achieve sustainable industrial development with minimal to zero emissions.

For example, tapping the continent's vast renewable energy resources, such as solar and wind, could bridge the energy gap, support climate change adaptation and unlock income opportunities in Africa, according to the *International Policy Digest*, an independent foreign policy publication. The *Digest* advises African leaders to enhance agro-value chains through Ecosystem-Based Adaptation (EBA) approaches, including agro-forestry, efficient irrigation and conservation agriculture, in which soil is managed in

ways that do not destroy its structure and biodiversity.

The 2015 Africa Progress Panel (APP) report, issued by a group of 10 distinguished Africans that includes former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, advocates for sustainable development in Africa and reinforces the need for a focus on renewable energy. The report states that sub-Saharan Africa's energy poverty is high, with over 60% having no access to electricity while 80% lack access to clean cooking facilities. In the rural areas, where 70% of Africa's poor reside, access to grid electricity is estimated at between 1% and 8%. Still, people in these areas pay 20 times more (estimated to be $10 billion annually) for unclean lighting sources, mostly kerosene lamps, than rich households connected to the grid spend on lighting, which further entrenches poverty.

In addition, Africa spends $50 billion yearly on oil subsidies, which mostly benefit the richest 40% of households. Considering that $50 billion is 5.7% of Africa's GDP, which exceeds spending on health, redirecting such funds to low-carbon initiatives could go a long way toward improving living standards and even lead to environmental sustainability. Investments in clean energy such as solar and wind are the most economical for electrification in remote areas, and such investments enhance household savings and create jobs, maintains the *International Policy Digest*.

On solar, representatives from governments, business and civil society announced many new initiatives and commitments in Paris that included plans to mobilize up to $1 trillion per year—the so-called Clean Trillion—in solar investments worldwide, which is more positive news for Africa. In 2015 the renewable energy sector created 7.7 million jobs globally, an 18% increase from 2014. Though its share of renewable energy is still paltry, Africa can create a thriving electricity industry in addition to adding an estimated 2.5 million temporary and permanent jobs, according to the McKinsey Report, a global management consulting firm.

Africa has abundant sunshine, yet over 600 million Africans are energy poor. Demand for solar home systems (SHS) should continue to increase. Bangladesh's example is inspiring: despite being one of the least-developed countries, Bangladesh's SHS sector has created over 115,000 direct jobs and an additional 50,000 indirect jobs through investments in solar in rural areas. Africa's governments can emulate Bangladesh by providing financial and technical support to renewable-energy businesses.

In addition, Africa's poor households can save up to $8 billion annually through access to renewable options such as solar. By switching to clean energy, sub-Saharan African can lift between 16 million and 26 million people out of poverty, according to the APP report.

Clean energy benefits the environment. Leading up to 2040, Africa could achieve a 27% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions, according to various projections. The Paris Agreement provides a policy framework as well as technical and investment support for the continent's emissions-reduction efforts.

Agro-value chains

Given that the climate deal hammers on the need to restore no fewer than 127 million hectares of degraded land in Africa and Latin America, mostly through agro-ecosystems, the net gain for Africa could be increased agricultural productivity leading to food security, climate adaptation and income and job creation. Agriculture employs about 64% of all Africans, providing livelihoods for 70% of the rural poor, according to the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

Ecosystem-Based Adaptation–driven approaches enhance agricultural productivity and ensure that ecosystems are not damaged but continue to provide water, soil formation, insect pollinators, hydrologic regulation and other benefits. Applying these techniques in farming can boost yields by up to 128%, enhance ecosystems capacity and climate adaptation, lower climate-induced crop failure risks and increase farmer incomes.

Experts suggest that by providing farmers who practice Ecosystem-Based Adaptation with affordable financing, reliable and efficient access to markets and clean energy, agro-industrialization can be spurred to create as many as 17 million jobs and boost Africa's agricultural sector, projected to be worth $1 trillion by 2030. The World Bank states that a 10% increase in crop yields translates to approximately a 7% reduction in poverty in Africa, and that agricultural growth is at least two to four times more effective in reducing poverty than commensurate growths in other sectors.

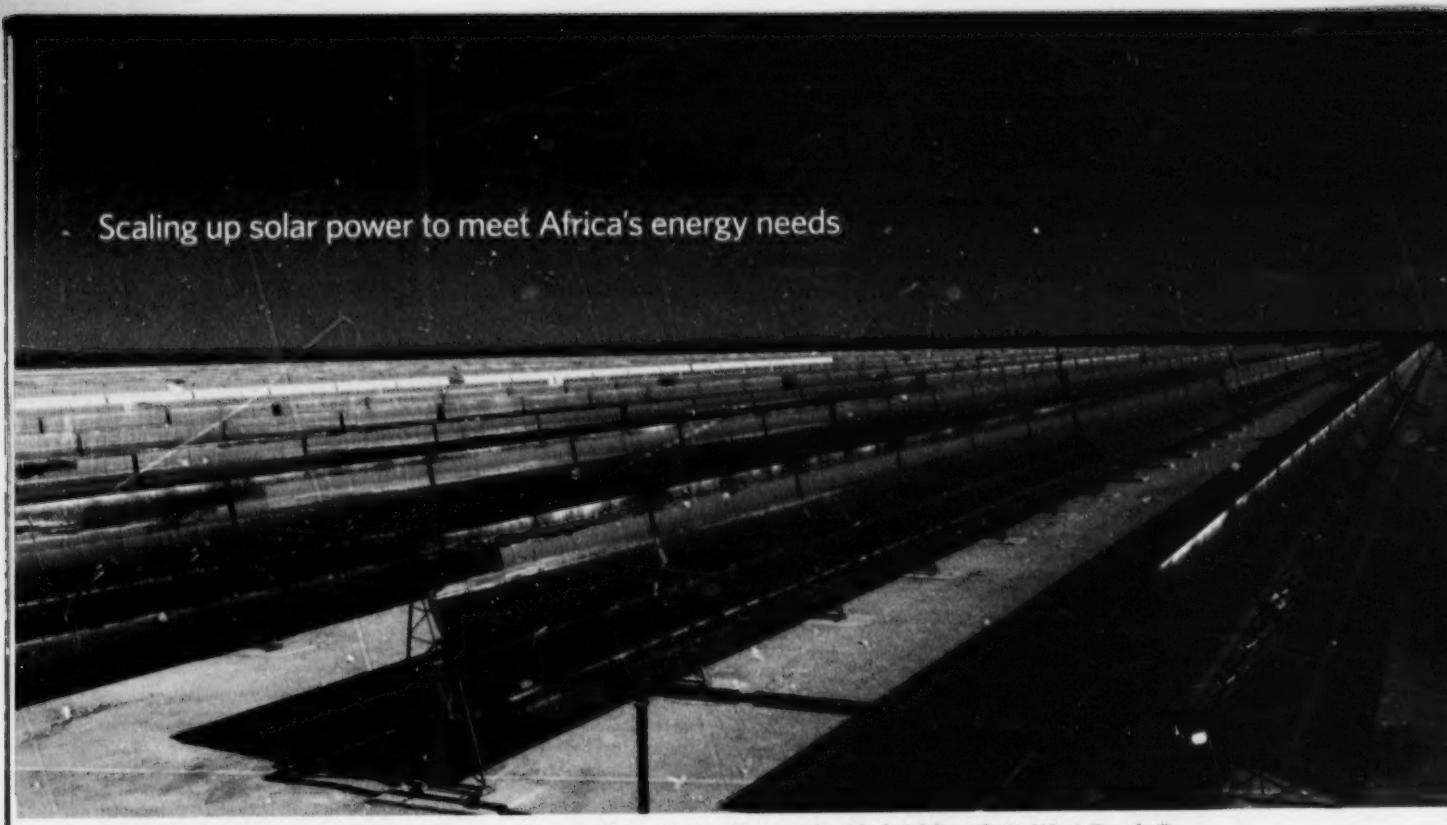
Implementing the deal

While commending the Paris Agreement, Africa's development experts also acknowledge that the continent's implementation record hasn't been stellar. However, the general consensus is that Africa appears determined to implement the agreement. To start with, the African Union Commission (AUC) and UNEP have already established the Ecosystem-Based Adaptation for Food Security Assembly (EBAFOSA) as a policy and an implementation platform. This platform is expected to promote and support agro-value chains through an EBA-driven agriculture approach. To achieve sustainable and inclusive growth, countries will be urged to integrate these techniques in their agricultural policies and implementation.

Overall, the consensus is that the Paris Agreement is a win for all. For Africa in particular, it presents a unique opportunity to create and implement strategies that use new approaches and technologies to realize the dream of an environmentally sustainable and economically flourishing continent.

Richard Munang is an Africa climate change and development policy expert. Robert Mgendi is an adaptation policy expert. They are both with UNEP.

Scaling up solar power to meet Africa's energy needs



The world's largest solar power plant in Morocco will eventually provide 1.1 million people with electricity. World Bank/Dana Smillie

BY **FRANCK KUWONU**

In Niger's eastern region of Diffa in the south of the Ténéré Desert – a vast sandy area across Niger and Chad up in the Sahara desert – are the ruins of a century-old colonial fort. The area around it, an oasis called Agadem, is one of the sunniest spots on earth, behind only a patch in the middle of the Pacific Ocean around Hawaii and Kiribati Island, according to the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

From 1983 to 2005, data from NASA researchers showed that Agadem received sun radiation averaging a sweltering 6.78 kilowatt hours per square metre per day, enough energy then to produce electricity to heat water each day in a typical American home.

Niger, and by extension the Sahara desert, is like a giant solar panel, and now experts say the discovery will be a bonanza for the region's energy prospects. Harvesting solar energy, including through the use of large-scale photovoltaic panel installations, could help power much of Africa.

However, except for the Ouarzazate Solar Power Station in Morocco, no other major projects have emerged to exploit the huge energy potential in the Sahara. To some extent the Nigerien case illustrates the paradox of a continent where relatively little is harvested although sun radiation abounds.

Africa has 7 of the 10 sunniest countries on earth: Chad, Egypt, Kenya, Madagascar, Niger, South Africa and Sudan. A few solar projects have sprung up in the last few years on other parts of the continent, and interest in building new projects has been growing steadily. But solar power development in Africa remains modest.

Desperately short of electricity

According to HIS Technology, a US-based economic and energy market research company, Africa's total solar power-generating capacity, estimated at 312 megawatts in 2013, grew to 1,315 megawatts in 2015, and is projected to reach 3,380 megawatts by 2017—a tenfold increase over a period of four years.

"The big jump occurred in 2014," Josefin Berg, the IHS Technology senior solar power analyst, told *Africa Renewal*. "Around 900 megawatts' additional capacities were added in that year alone."

Power shortages remain common throughout Africa mainly in the main urban centres, while vast swaths of rural areas have no electric power at all.

"Sub-Saharan Africa is desperately short of electricity," the *Africa Progress Report 2015*, an annual publication of the Africa Progress Panel chaired by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, reported in June 2015. "The region's grid has a power generation capacity of 90 gigawatts (GW) and half of it is located in one country, South Africa," the report added. That is less than the capacity in South Korea, where the population is only 5% that of sub-Saharan Africa.

Across sub-Saharan Africa, only a couple of countries, such as Togo, provide uninterrupted electricity supply all year round. As a consequence, the region is losing 2–4% of its annual gross domestic product. And while South Africa has half of all sub-Saharan electricity, residents have not been spared load shedding. The power blackouts negatively affect economic productivity, and the situation is expected to last through 2017, with the South Africa Reserve Bank anticipating a loss of 0.6% in economic growth in 2015 and 2016.

Droughts that affect hydroelectric dams, higher fuel costs that make it more expensive to run thermal generators, poor maintenance of existing infrastructure and lack of investments are some of the causes of the poor state of Africa's power sector.

Tapping the potential

More than other countries, South Africa is looking at solar energy as part of the response to its power crisis. Installed capacity is expected to reach 8,400 megawatts of solar power by 2030, and an additional 8,400 megawatts of wind power. Several solar photovoltaics have been commissioned, including the 96-megawatt Jasper Solar Energy Project, one of Africa's largest photovoltaic power stations, which aims at providing enough solar power for 30,000 homes. The country has ramped up production capacities in the last two years, and the growth accounts for about 90% of the jump in continent-wide solar capacity from 312 megawatts in 2013 to 1,315 megawatts in 2015.

Morocco is building one of the world's largest solar energy projects, having launched its first phase in February 2016. At the same time, the country embarked on the second phase of the project, which, once completed by 2018, would provide electricity to 1.1 million people and cover 14% of the country's energy needs by 2020.

With its Nzema project, Ghana was supposed to lead the solar revolution in the region. An ambitious solar farm about 270 kms from the capital, Accra, it was to go online in 2015 and generate 155 megawatts — enough to power 100,000 homes. It was designed to be connected to the national grid and to strengthen Ghana's energy exports to its neighbours. Its promoters touted it as a game changer for Africa. However, four years after the project was announced, Nzema has yet to materialize. According to reports, construction of the plant will commence soon, with a possible completion date in 2017.

Delays continue to affect most of Africa's solar projects. In West Africa it takes five to six years on average for a solar project to be completed, Doug Coleman, the project director for the Nzema solar plant, told *Africa Renewal*. In contrast, the average turnover in South Africa is 9 to 24 months. Both Mr. Berg of IHS Technology and Mr. Coleman point out that this is because the South African market is more developed and mature. "Elsewhere, policies and regulations are still being developed," said Mr. Coleman.

According to the World Bank, market fragmentation, high transaction costs, perceived risks and the cost of capital are some of the obstacles holding back private investors.

Earlier last year the World Bank launched the Scaling Solar initiative to reduce "the development time and uncertainty for bidders and investors, while lowering tariffs for utilities." The programme, managed by the International Finance Corporation, an arm of the bank, will offer tendering and financing expertise and help make privately financed projects operational within two years. As the price of photovoltaic panels continues to decline on the international market and as solar projects start generating profits, new renewable energy markets will have a greater appeal for private investors, says the Bank.

In August the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) reckoned that the country saved the equivalent of $584 million — a tenfold increase over last year — from wind and solar energy just in the first six months of 2015. The CISR expects the savings to grow as more projects come online.

Fortunately, as Africa's solar prospects continue to improve, several companies have shown interest in developing solutions. Last August, SkyPower, an American solar company, entered into an agreement with Kenya to build a gigawatt plant over the next five years.

"Such big announcements are very common," Mr. Berg of HIS Technology says, however, they take time to materialize, if they ever do.

With other sub-Saharan African countries embarking on the solar journey, both the World Bank initiative and the South African experience show that renewable energy, despite today's constraints, could have a bright future on the continent.

Solar power gaining a foothold in Africa

BY **ERNEST HARSCH**

Roadside shops along the main highway from Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso's capital, to the northwest offer diverse wares: leather goods, wooden furniture, colourful plastic buckets, grilled chicken, motorcycle parts and a relatively new product—solar panels.

The area, Bassinko, with its ongoing construction of affordable housing, is attracting a growing population. But power supply here remains insecure and there are repeated blackouts, hence a demand for additional sources of power. Merchants make brisk sales of replacing solar panels, and some businesses have emerged that specialize in installing and servicing solar systems for small businesses and households.

Development experts across Africa have long pointed to the potential benefits of solar energy. Although a few African countries have significant oil reserves, electricity is not always reliable, while their carbon emissions harm the environment. Some countries have the capacity to greatly expand hydropower generation, some have potential sources of thermal energy, and many could develop wind power. But all African countries have plentiful sunlight.

However, economic reality — the high cost of solar technologies — long conspired to keep solar power beyond the reach of ordinary Africans.

In Burkina Faso, Prime Minister Paul Kaba Thiéba says the government has decided to focus specifically on solar energy, as part of a planned transition "toward clean and renewable energies."

Besides building solar plants and encouraging businesses to install solar units, the government is working with banks and financial institutions to develop new lines of credit for purchasing solar installations.

World Bank vice-president for Africa Makhtar Diop — whose institution is helping to finance Burkina Faso's solar efforts — believes that the country's solar generating capacity will eventually reach "dozens of megawatts."

A new Burkina Faso in the making

A new agenda of democractic and economic changes

BY **ERNEST HARSCH**

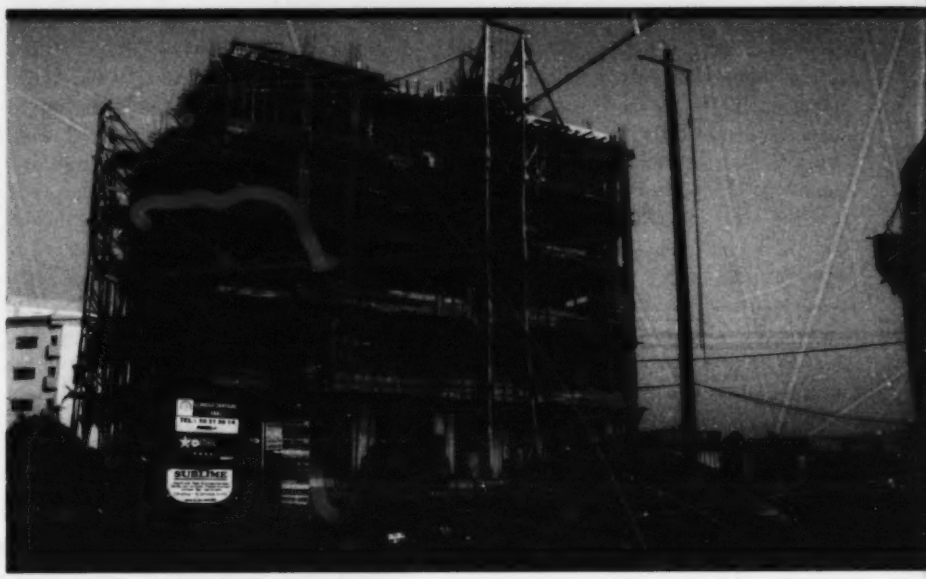
"Burkina is proud," declare the billboards along the capital Ouagadougou's major thoroughfares. When they were first put up in December 2015 to mark the election of a new government, many citizens were not only proud, but also hopeful that they could at last start building the "new Burkina Faso" they had long imagined.

The country had been through a lot. An authoritarian regime that had been in place for more than a quarter of a century was finally ousted in October 2014 in what the Burkinabè call the "popular insurrection."

The fire-blackened ruins of the old National Assembly building still stand in the city centre as a stark reminder of the public fury that forced then-president Blaise Compaoré to flee to neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire. The subsequent year of transition was a troubled one, with important reforms but also missteps, punctuated by a failed coup attempt in September by Compaoré's notorious presidential guard.

When elections were finally held in November 2015, they were greeted with relief. Observers certified them as the most open and democratic ever in the country. They also brought in the first elected civilian leader in nearly 50 years, President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré. Hearing his pledges to fight corruption, pursue further democratic reforms and tackle poverty and hunger, many believed that things would at last begin to improve.

But then came an unexpected attack on 15 January this year by fighters loyal to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, who had infiltrated the capital from across Burkina Faso's northern borders. More than 30 people, foreigners and Burkinabè, were slaughtered in the heart of the city. It was by far the worst terrorist assault the country had experienced. Once the initial shock lifted, a somber mood remained. Popular hopes did not vanish, but there was a sober realization that the road ahead would not, after all, be straight.



A building under construction in Ouagadougou. *Ernest Harsch*

Striking a balance

When President Kaboré was inaugurated at the end of December, people's hopes were pinned on tangible improvements: lower living costs, expanded schooling and health care, jobs, prosecution of the corrupt, greater social and political justice. In his first speeches, the president focused mainly on how he would meet those expectations.

Before his cabinet ministers were even sworn in, however, the terrorist attack made security a clear priority for both government officials and ordinary citizens. Yet strengthening security would not mean minimizing or postponing other goals for the population.

In a French television interview, Mr. Kaboré outlined the path ahead. "If we do not ensure that there is development, hope and work for young people, then the ground on which terrorists operate—poverty and misery—will remain," he said. "So it is important that while struggling for security, we must also work for the development of our country."

And he pledged, as development efforts continue, security is being reinforced. Reforms are ongoing to restructure the army following the dissolution of the presidential guard regiment that tried to seize power last September. Not only should the reforms ensure that the military stays out of politics, as the president told his generals in early February, but they should lead to better coordination, an upgrading of arms and equipment and specialized antiterrorist training for security forces.

Ouagadougou and the other main cities are on high alert, with armed checkpoints at key facilities, roads and hotels, night patrols, video surveillance and so on. France and the United States – whose special forces joined Burkinabè units against the terrorists in January – have pledged more assistance.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, during an early March visit, assured the Burkinabè of the international organization's firm support. "The stakes are high," said Mr. Ban. "The country is on the path of prosperity and long-term reforms, including that of the security sector."

Safeguarding the country must not be left solely to those in uniform, says Hervé Ouattara, a leader of one of the movements that helped topple Mr. Compaoré. "Burkinabè are organizing themselves in their *arrondissements* [districts] to watch what is going on and expose anyone working with the [jihadist] fronts from the north," he told *Africa Renewal* in Ouagadougou. "Security in our country is not for the army alone, but for everyone."

A struggling people

Meanwhile the population's economic and social needs remain daunting. In 2014, according to recent estimates by the National Institute of Statistics, just over 40% of all Burkinabè lived in poverty, a rate that reached 70% in the arid north. That was better than the 46.7% registered nationally five years earlier, but still leaves the country one of the poorest on the continent.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates that this year some 660,000 Burkinabè will need food aid and that half a million of the country's children will continue to suffer from acute malnutrition. Although a slightly better cereal harvest than last year's is anticipated, the government still expects that a third of Burkina Faso's 45 provinces will experience deficits, and is budgeting about US$52 million to assist the food insecure.

In a policy speech to parliament on 5 February, Prime Minister Paul Kaba Thiéba focused on a "new social contract" with the people. Besides improved security, it is to include resolute action to combat corruption (and thus conserve scarce state resources), measures to stimulate economic growth and investment, the introduction of universal medical insurance, and the construction of hundreds of new primary health clinics, secondary schools and teacher training colleges.

The government will begin implementing a new mining code, adopted last year as required by the World Bank, for the release of $100 million in budget support for the West African country. It abolishes a previous 10% tax break on mining company profits and obliges firms to pay into a local development fund.

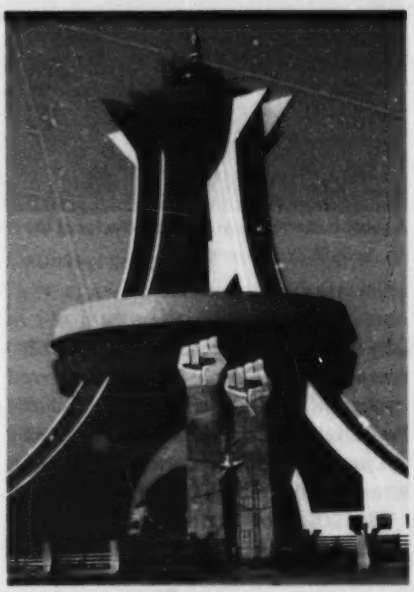
In a country known mainly for cotton and livestock exports a decade ago, gold mining is now the biggest economic sector, producing more than 36 metric tonnes in 2014 and earning $1.6 billion in foreign sales that year. But the previous government's rapid mining push also brought major problems, including water contamination and persistent social conflicts around mining sites. The new code is intended to strengthen environmental safeguards, ensure higher revenues for the state and oblige companies to invest much more in local health, education and other community facilities.

Monitoring officeholders

The ouster of Burkina Faso's former leader and the successful November elections stirred expectations that the new authorities would not only conduct themselves with greater integrity and openness, but also support more democratic reforms. Yet activists are aware that Mr. Kaboré and several of his closest colleagues long served in the old government before joining the movement for democracy.

While acknowledging the authorities' repeated promises to govern differently, many remain cautious and watchful. "We are not giving them any honeymoon," says Ismael Diallo, spokesperson of the Front for the Reinforcement of Citizenship, one of the country's main civil society coalitions. "We have to be vigilant."

Just a day earlier, Mr. Diallo said a number of civil society groups plan to launch a "Présimètre" ("president meter"), online, to periodically track how well the president fulfills his promises. When it is operational, the results will be available to everyone on the web (www.presimetre.bf). The activists sent a delegation to inform Mr. Kaboré about the initiative. "He said he likes the idea," Mr. Diallo laughed. "But even if he doesn't like it, we will do it."



Monument in honour of martyrs. Ernest Harsch

Women's rights will be one area under scrutiny. While gender equality is protected under Burkina Faso's constitution and law, in practice, female genital mutilation, forced and early marriage and domestic violence are widespread, says Amnesty International. Decisions about pregnancy and marriage are often taken by male family members. As a result only 17% of women in Burkina Faso use contraception and more than 2,000 die in childbirth every year, according to Amnesty International.

Despite an increase in women voters in November, only 12 women were among the 127 deputies elected to the National Assembly – half the number chosen in the last parliamentary election, in 2012. The political parties generally met the official quota of 30% female candidates, but tended to rank them lower on their slates, so few were actually elected.

To partially address parliament's gender imbalance, Prime Minister Thiéba named seven women to his 29-member cabinet, including Finance Minister Rosine Coulibaly, a former UN Development Programme resident representative in Benin. Mr. Kaboré has promised that in areas where the government develops new land for farming, between 25% and 30% will be allocated to women.

Marie Madeleine Somda, a women's activist who served as a deputy in the interim transitional parliament last year, is disappointed but still optimistic about the future because women, especially young women, "are beginning to become engaged," she told *Africa Renewal*, adding, "They are starting to see that if they themselves don't do politics, politics will just be done to them."

More generally, Ms. Somda is pleased to see the emergence of a generation of youth "who are conscious, active, determined. Youth are becoming more and more responsible. They see themselves as a force able to take their place among decision makers."

Terrorism overshadows internal conflicts

As African countries scramble for solutions

BY **LANSANA GBERIE**

Is terrorism becoming the dominant mode of conflict in Africa? This is a question many are asking following the recent surge in terror attacks across Africa. Since January about a dozen African countries, including Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Côte d'ivoire and Somalia, have suffered terror attacks in which thousands of civilians have been killed.

The attacks at the beginning of the year in Burkina Faso, in which 30 people died, reveal a new pattern in that the attackers — without any apparent base or network of support in the country, and with no clear strategic local goals — came from elsewhere and targeted distinct tourist attractions with no known connection to either government or the military.

The groups perpetrating these attacks are embryonic: their only definable characteristic is that they profess extremist Islamic tendencies. For this reason they respect neither political nor geographical boundaries; and, except perhaps for Al-Shabaab militants in Somalia, the attackers do not articulate clear local political goals.

From what societal wellspring does this deadly militancy arise? And how is Africa tackling it?

A guest is checked with a metal detector at the entrance of a hotel in Yaounde, Cameroon.
Panapress/Jean-Pierre Kepseu

Now a key security threat

In the 1990s, terror attacks in Africa were somewhat episodic and limited to relatively well-defined local contexts (in Algeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Uganda, for example). But now the emergence of groups like Boko Haram in Nigeria (with its regional reach), and the spread of Somalia's Al-Shabaab attacks into Kenya and Uganda, have made terrorism a key security threat in Africa.

According to research by veteran African security analyst Jakkie Cilliers, head of the Institute of Security Studies, about 37% of the 39,286 violence-related fatalities recorded in Africa in 2014 occurred in Nigeria, mainly as a result of attacks by Boko Haram. This is followed closely by the percentage of such fatalities related to attacks by Al-Shabaab in Somalia.

In 2014, for example, Boko Haram killed 6,664 people — mostly civilians — in Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad, not to mention the kidnapping of hundreds of people, including the 250 girl students of Chibok over a year ago. That's more than the 6,073 deaths attributed to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

In all, Boko Haram has killed more than 15,000 people and displaced more than 2.1 million Nigerians since it began its extremist activities a few years ago. Mr. Cilliers's research shows that largely due to terrorist activities, armed-conflict

incidents in Africa rose from 40% of the global total in 2013 to 52% in 2014. This is despite the fact that Africa has barely 16% of the world's population.

Africa currently hosts several terrorist groups that are affiliated with or influenced by Al-Qaeda. They operate across the vast expanse of the Sahel in Libya, Tunisia, and Algeria, as well as in Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Somalia, Mali and Kenya.

The deadly attacks on the Radisson Blu Hotel in Mali's capital, Bamako, on 20 November 2015, which killed 22 people, including two attackers, and an eerily similar attack on the Splendid Hotel in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, on 15 January this year, which killed 30, have been claimed by Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

African armies fight back

Nigeria has spent billions of dollars and dedicated tens of thousands of troops to fight Boko Haram, as have other African countries, with significant outside support. These efforts have blunted the power of these groups. Since the election of President Muhammadu Buhari in Nigeria in March 2015, Boko Haram appears to have been pushed out of large swaths of territory it once occupied—but the militants remain active in Nigeria and surrounding countries.

In eastern Africa powerful armies from Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda are confronting Al-Shabaab in Somalia and Kenya. The presence of regional troops operating under the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has prevented Al-Shabaab from taking over the country. Except for the failed bombing of a Daallo Airlines flight departing Mogadishu earlier this year, the group has lately been unable to carry out any serious attacks on the neighbouring countries.

Who is a terrorist?

Within the African Union, discussions about what constitutes a terrorist group are highly contentious. Countries in western and eastern Africa that are directly affected by such attacks are more ready to label militant groups as terrorists; southern African countries whose liberation struggles against white domination were routinely described as terrorist are invariably wary of the term. After all, they argue, even Nelson Mandela was once described by major Western powers as a terrorist.

As a result the African Union has adopted a fairly convoluted definition of terrorism, describing it merely by implication. Armed struggles waged by people in accordance with "the principles of international law for their liberation or self-determination, including armed struggle against colonialism, occupation, aggression and domination by foreign forces" shall not be considered as terrorism, it states. The burden is therefore to determine the causes, determinants and course of each violent action or manifestation of extremism.

Some experts assert that some terrorist acts are due to some unresolved local issues. Most of the attacks may be terroristic, but are the militants therefore terrorist groups by the oblique definition of the African Union? These experts believe it might be better to isolate each group's distinct social roots – what it draws upon and what makes it persist amid the powerful forces ranged against it.

> Armed-conflict incidents in Africa rose from 40% of the global total in 2013 to 52% in 2014. This is despite the fact that Africa has barely 16% of the world's population.

Boko Haram started as a local rebellion in northern Nigeria and for many years remained so. It has roots in the widespread resentment of economic and social dereliction and official neglect in the largely impoverished northern half of Nigeria. The election of Mr. Buhari, a northerner, has undermined the group's appeal, which is partly why it has lost territory.

Counterstrokes

In West Africa the recent reorganization of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) by Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger, Chad and Benin to tackle Boko Haram offered immense hope in many quarters. The force was set up in 1994 by the Nigerian government to "checkmate banditry activities and to facilitate free movement" along its northern border. But an early setback for the force came in January 2015, when Boko Haram fighters overran its headquarters at Baga, Nigeria. After that the MNJTF headquarters was moved to N'Djamena, Chad, and troops were increased.

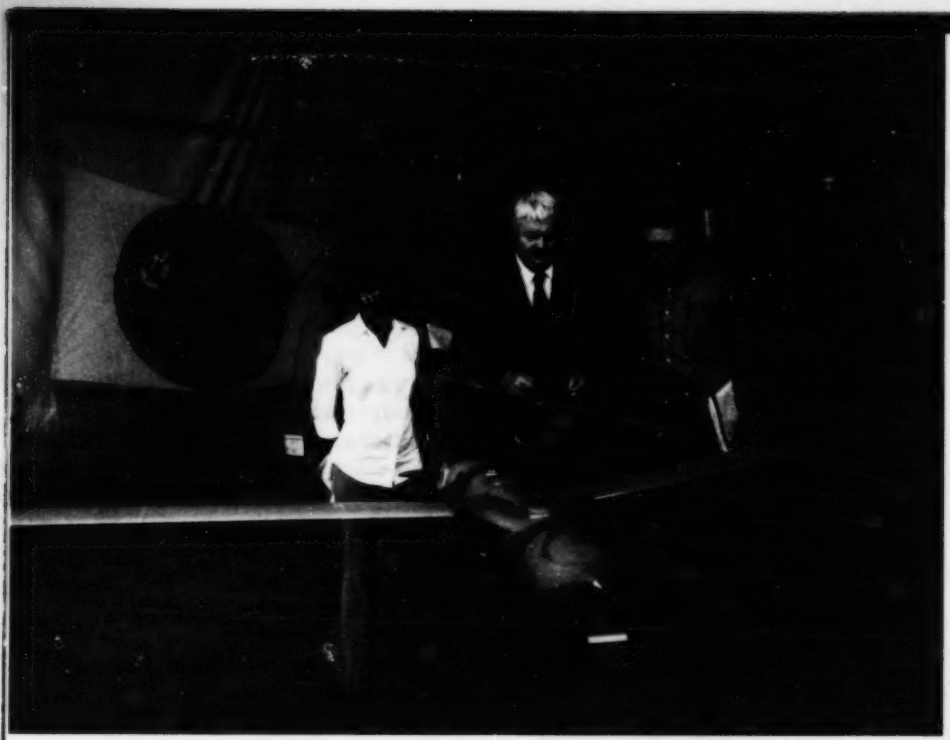
A new concept of operations, under the supervision of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, was also recently agreed upon, and in October 2015 the United States deployed 300 Special Forces personnel to Cameroon to help in the surveillance of Boko Haram and to support the MNJTF. News reports also suggest that US president Barack Obama might be considering increasing counterinsurgency activities against the Islamic State in Libya.

Meanwhile the UN Security Council continues its support for AMISOM as well as for the African-dominated UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)—both of them combating militant activities. Militant attacks, including against peacekeepers, continue in both countries.

Security Council resolution 2231 of July 2015 urged the African Union to undertake "a structured and targeted reconfiguration of AMISOM to boost its efficiency, in particular by strengthening command and control structures, and enhancing cross-sector operations."

All that notwithstanding, the 12 November 2015 UN report on the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel paints a grim picture, noting that "terrorist groups have intensified asymmetric attacks in the north and have even moved southwards with attacks in the centre too, including in the Malian capital, Bamako, at the border with Burkina Faso and Mauritania, as well as in the south at the border region with Côte d'Ivoire."

Despite an increase in terrorist activities, many believe that Africa should still celebrate the end of major wars—in Angola, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone, and elsewhere. The efforts by African governments and their armies, with international support, to defeat terrorism should ensure the important achievement of ending many wars is not undercut.



UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous (centre) tours the Dutch camp of the UN Mission in Mali. UN Photo/Marco Dormino

Hervé Ladsous is the United Nations under-secretary-general for peacekeeping operations. He oversaw the first deployment of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or drones in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) two years ago. *Africa Renewal's* **Masimba Tafirenyika** spoke to him about the UN's experience in using UAVs in peacekeeping operations. These are excerpts from the interview.

INTERVIEW

Drones are effective in protecting civilians

— Hervé Ladsous

Africa Renewal: First of all, I would like to know your views about the recent independent report on peacekeeping operations, which recommended, among other things, the use of high-tech equipment including UAVs or drones in UN missions.

Hervé Ladsous: Actually that report picked up initiatives taken over a year ago when I tasked a group of experts to look into the use of technology and innovation in peacekeeping. It came up with a number of recommendations, a large part of which we are already implementing. You're right in saying the UAVs are the more visible part of this array of suggestions. I just want to make it very clear that our UAVs are unarmed. They are for surveillance purpose only. It is now becoming a relatively common tool. We started just over two years ago in the DRC. But we are now deploying surveillance drones of every denomination — tactical and strategic. For instance, we have also deployed them in Mali and in CAR [Central African Republic]. Of course I would very much want to deploy some in South Sudan because that is the key for us to perform better. UAVs do a better job in protecting civilians because they provide real-time pictures of situations as they develop on the ground. You can act more quickly and more decisively. They also provide better security to our people because you get prior warnings that an ambush or an attack is about to happen. You are then in a position to prepare for it. And sometimes you can actually save people's lives. For example, a year and a half ago one of our machines was flying over Lake Kivu to Goma Airport in the DRC. The pilot in his bunker saw on the screen a boat which had just capsized. That allowed us to send rescuers and we were able to save 16 people from drowning. That was of course a bit of luck but it shows that UAVs are very versatile and necessary tools in our operations.

It's been about two years since the UN deployed UAVs in eastern DRC. How has that changed the dynamics of the fight against anti-government forces?

We get much better information about what is happening on the ground. We can see groups on the prowl. I saw some of the photos captured by the drones. In certain circumstances, we can actually recognize the faces. We now have knowledge of what is happening on the ground and how to mitigate or to proactively intervene. We have lots of enablers in eastern Congo. We have attack helicopters, we have artillery and we have a robust mandate. It's really about putting an end to the incredible damage that the so-called harm groups have done over the years, forcing millions of people to run away as refugees or internally displaced persons, raping hundreds of thousands of women, recruiting tens of thousands of children into their ranks and plundering the resources of the Kivus. That had to be put to an end. That is why the UN Security Council gave us a mandate to neutralize armed groups. That's what we are trying to do, but it's not an easy task.

Besides UAVs, what other high-tech equipment are you using?

Well, it's more about gathering information: we did it just in time for the election process in the Central African Republic and also during the pope's visit to the

country. We were able—for the first time in one of our missions – to deploy in the capital, Bangui, a system of tethered balloons which carry an array of sensors, cameras, infrared and other equipment to keep watch over the city. We had the ability to see real-time if there was a demonstration starting somewhere or some hostile groups getting together so we could act in a more timely fashion. We are in northern Mali right now and we are in the process of deploying counter battery radars, which will allow us to retaliate against terrorists or jihadists who regularly lob mortar shells or rockets at our camps. They killed three of our people recently. Counter battery radars allow us to retaliate immediately. There are a number of important things we can do with high technology. The [UN] Secretary-General is committed to it. It also allows us to reduce the carbon footprint of peacekeeping, to be more environment-friendly and to consume less fuel, among other things.

There has been some hesitance on the use of high-tech equipment in peacekeeping missions from some member states fearing they could probably collect much more than intelligence. What is being done to allay such fears?

Well, first I would say there are less fears today than two or three years ago, when people didn't know much about [UAVs]. We have also learned more about UAVs as we make progress. It's not really so much about intelligence gathering as information gathering. We have to be aware of what is happening around us. In northern Mali, for instance, if we are deaf, if we are blind, how can we do our job? It's simply a matter of acquiring the right tools. And I think this is now being widely recognized by member states.

So do you see this as the way to go in twenty-first-century UN peacekeeping?

That is certainly one way to go. It's not the only one, but I think it has to be recognized that we need the right, modern tools. UAVs, for example, can now be bought off the shelf even for recreational purposes, and even businesses are increasingly using them. Why should we deprive ourselves of readily available technologies?

UN surveillance equipment under test attached to a truck. UN/Nektarios Markogiannis

In the past the UN had problems getting countries to contribute fighter helicopters. Do you think UAVs could be one way of replacing attack helicopters?

No, we make it very clear that UAVs are for surveillance purposes only. They are unarmed and will remain unarmed because the fact that they are remote-controlled creates potential risks. We don't want to go into that. Attack helicopters of course have very precise rules of engagement. They step in or fly in under very precise types of circumstances and always under the direct control of the force commander. And we apply very rigorous procedures.

Finally, having been using UAVs and other high-tech equipment over the past few years, what lessons has the UN learned? Is this the way to go?

Well, I think, precisely, as you say, this is the way to go. But this is something that is in constant evolution. I just signed a cooperation agreement with the Republic of Singapore. They are going to help us develop a new software tool that will provide real-time images of the security situation in a given country. We don't have that now. For instance, in Mali, we will be able to know the security situation at any time in a given area. This is something we should have had long ago. But we're addressing these issues as they come.

Somalia rising from the ashes

"Incredible progress" noted by the IMF

BY **SULAIMAN MOMODU**

Somalis prepare coffee for customers in a Mogadishu restaurant. *AP Photo/Farah Abdi Warsameh*

These days Somalis reminisce about life before the war. With a sense of nostalgia they reflect on the carefree days of swimming, picnics and cinema; when children were in school, the economy was growing and business was booming, providing jobs for thousands of Somali citizens.

That golden period was to end abruptly in 1991 with the onset of a debilitating war that ruined the economy and obliterated the banking system. Today the mention of Somalia invokes chilling images of the deadly activities of Al-Shabaab militants, suicide bombers or pirates.

But the horrors that defined Somalia during the civil war are slowly giving way to a new Somalia, one that is becoming relatively peaceful and is making slow but steady socioeconomic and political progress. The problem is that few people are noticing this change.

"Somalia is an emerging success story, but momentum needs to be sustained," said Nicholas Kay, the former UN special representative to Somalia, at the turn of the year.

And the Somali foreign affairs minister, Abdusalam Omer, concurs: "Major progress has been made. Somalia is coming out of its dark past."

The International Monetary Fund (IMF), which resumed relations with the country in April 2013, is lending credence to the new Somalia narrative. Its review of the Somali economy, the first by the IMF in over two decades, noted that between 2012 and 2014, Somalia's real GDP grew by 3.7%. Although Somalia cannot yet seek financial assistance from the IMF due to long-standing arrears — amounting to US$328 million in late 2015 — renewed recognition by the IMF is a critical first step and demonstrates the country is putting its administrative house in order.

Somalia's economic growth has been fueled in part by an increase in agricultural production. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), in 2014, Somalia exported over five million livestock to markets in the Gulf States—its highest annual number of live animal exports in the past 20 years. These consisted of 4.6 million goats and sheep, 340,000 cattle and 77,000 camels, and the total estimated value of $360 million contributed 40% to the country's gross domestic product.

"The country has made incredible progress," says the IMF's Somalia mission chief, Rogerio Zandamela, adding, "The IMF has not been alone in helping Somalia—the African Development Bank, the World Bank and bilateral donors such as the European Union, and countries like Kenya, Norway, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States are extremely active."

5mn

livestock were exported from Somalia in 2014 to markets in the Gulf States, its highest annual number of live animal exports in the past 20 years

The impact of renewed economic activity is easy to discern in Mogadishu, the country's capital, where eye-catching office buildings and residential apartments are replacing bullet-riddled, dilapidated structures.

Once a no-go area for commercial airlines, Mogadishu is now receiving daily flights again. Restaurants, taxi companies, employment agencies, dry cleaners, gyms, real estate offices and fast food courts are springing up throughout the capital and in other cities in the country.

The economy is being accelerated by growth in livestock and fisheries and a resurgent private sector, notably in the services industry, which includes telecommunications, construction and money transfer. "If improvement in security continues, the entrepreneurial private sector will continue to be the most dynamic contributor to economic growth," says an upbeat Mr. Zandamela.

Somalia's resource potential makes it possible that socioeconomic conditions may show even greater improvement. According to the IMF's country head, "The country has natural resources, including gas and petroleum, fisheries, and more. Proper management of these natural resources is vital to Somalia's success."

Last October the World Bank announced a partnership with the Central Bank of Somalia (CBS) to facilitate the flow of remittances to Somalis, and appointed an agent to work with the CBS in providing the right regulatory and supervisory oversight for remittances. "This is a very important initial step towards improving supervision and formalizing the money transfer business sector in Somalia," said Bella Bird, the World Bank country director for Somalia, whose portfolio also includes Burundi, Malawi, Somalia and Tanzania. "We anticipate these measures will build confidence in the international community with regard to the Somali financial sector."

Politics and the humanitarian situation still matter

Somalia is slowly becoming an attractive business destination in East Africa, due in part to the improving security situation. Since 2012 the Somali government and the African Union–run peacekeeping mission in Somalia, AMISOM, have carried out joint operations to enhance security. But experts caution that the country's politics, if not handled properly, could throw a spanner in the works. A report to the UN Security Council by the Monitoring Group on Somalia, released in October 2015, levels allegations of ineptitude and corruption against the transitional government, questions the effectiveness of AMISOM and warns of the consequences of a resurgent Al-Shabaab.

Somalis are expected to go to the polls in August 2016 to elect a new government. The current president, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who was elected in 2012 and has been credited with overseeing a gradual return to normalcy, has indicated his intention to seek another term of office.

Although President Mohamud appears to be sending investors the right signals by indicating he will peacefully hand over power if defeated at the polls, his government has not been clear on what form the elections will take, stating that it will depend on the security situation. The president told a group of Somalis in the diaspora, "If elected I will continue. If not, I will hand over power to whoever is elected."

> More than two million Somalis remain displaced, of which 1.1 million are inside Somalia and 967,000 are refugees in neighbouring countries.

In addition to the forthcoming elections, a humanitarian crisis and fallout from the war continue to challenge the government. More than two million Somalis remain displaced, of whom 1.1 million are inside Somalia and 967,000 are refugees in neighbouring countries. Kenya alone hosts about 420,000 Somali refugees, mostly at the Dadaab refugee settlement, located in the northeast of Kenya and one of the world's largest refugee camps of its kind. A further 250,000 Somalis are refugees in Ethiopia and an estimated 200,000 in Yemen.

In a sign of Somalia's growing stability, Kenya, Somalia and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2013 reached an agreement for the voluntary return of refugees to Somalia. Already the refugee agency has supported the return to Somalia of more than 6,000 Kenya-based refugees between December 2014 and December 2015.

From an economic viewpoint, returning refugees are likely to put a strain on limited social infrastructure such as housing, health facilities, and water, among others. However, some economists maintain that refugees' returning to their original homes can be a net positive for the economy. Their return enhances social cohesion and many can go into productive activities such as farming, which could contribute to the country's overall economic well-being.

Security concerns

Although the African Union and Somali forces have driven the Al-Qaeda-linked Al-Shabaab militants, who once ruled most of Somalia, out of Mogadishu, officials admit that security is still a difficult issue. Currently not all investors are enthusiastic about putting money into longer-term projects, which may be a reason for disproportionate growth in the services industry, which produces frequent cash flows, as opposed to sectors where returns on investments are likely to be realized in the longer term.

In January 2016, Kenyan forces pulled out of two military bases in Somalia after Al-Shabaab attacks in which dozens of troops were killed in El-Adde and set up new camp near the Kenya-Somalia border. Kenya contributes about 4,000 troops to the 22,000-strong African Union force battling the militants. Although the Kenyan government referred to the change of base as a "routine military maneuver," the development accentuates Somalia's precarious security situation.

The UN acknowledges the link between security and political and economic stability in Somalia. "We will do everything possible to ensure that Al-Shabaab does not succeed in its desperate attempts to frustrate the hopes of the Somali people," says Michael Keating, the special representative of the UN secretary-general in Somalia.

From strife to revival, Mogadishu holds

The Somali capital is in recovery mode despite many challenges

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The once serene section of Mogadishu, the Somali capital, conjures up disturbing images: pockmarked shells of roofless buildings that evoke memories of the ruins of Dresden (Germany) in the waning days of World War II. Or the sound of pickup trucks equipped with heavy machine guns and manned by *khat*-chewing militiamen who race through rubble-strewn streets amid makeshift camps of destitute families displaced by the chaos and carnage of a civil war that has been raging for decades.

I lived through all that. I remember vividly the day when the lives of us Mogadishu residents began to turn upside down. I was a 16-year-old high school student taking a geography test when I heard the thudding sound of artillery shells for the first time in my life on 27 January 1991. We were to learn later that the country's longtime military dictator Maj. Gen. Mohamed Siad Barre had been overthrown.

The fall of Siad Barre triggered a bloody struggle for control over Mogadishu among clan-based militias that would go on for years. It changed my life in so many ways. The staccato bursts of small-arms fire became the aural backdrop of my adolescence and the early years of my adulthood. A nephew was kidnapped and later killed because he belonged to the wrong clan in the eyes of his abductors.

Once renowned for the wide boulevards and Italianate colonial architecture that made it one of Africa's most beautiful capitals, Mogadishu was divided and shared among rival warlords. Government-built schools and hospitals became prime targets for looters bent on destroying all remaining vestiges of Siad Barre's 22-year rule.

Back from the brink

Today a new Mogadishu is rising from Somalia's turbulent past. From the time that Al-Shabaab militants pulled out of the city in August 2011, the Somali capital has been undergoing an economic renaissance that few would have conceived of only five years ago.

A vibrant night life has returned to the streets of the city's once-fashionable Shingaani district, and families and young couples have reclaimed Lido Beach as their weekend playground. A peace garden in the heart of Mogadishu boasts cafés, two football fields and park benches where Somalis can read local newspapers or exchange the latest political gossip.

Mogadishu is in recovery mode. "The city is like a patient who was in a deep coma, and then suddenly he moves his fingers and opens his eyes. Now he is moving his limbs and unfolding his legs," says Dr. Mohamed Yusuf, director of Madina Hospital, which was reduced to a camp for internally displaced persons in the 1990s at the height of the civil war.

The outside world is beginning to notice. In a recent survey of the world's fastest-growing cities with a population of at least 1 million, the US-based consulting firm Demographia ranked Mogadishu second, behind only the Indonesian city of Batam. Demographia

hopes and dreams

estimated Mogadishu's annual growth rate at 6.9%, fueled in large part by the return of growing numbers of diaspora Somalis who have come home to reconnect with their roots and explore investment opportunities following improvements in the security situation.

One of the glitzier showcases of the new Mogadishu is an upmarket housing estate located 7 km outside the capital, which opened its gates in August 2018. The Daru Salaam suburb will consist of 500 houses when it is completed. About 50 dwellings, with prices starting at around $70,000, had been completed by the end of 2018. The initial phase of construction cost an estimated $30 million; a local bank has provided the financing for the development of Daru Salaam, which means "House of Peace."

The gateway for most foreigners entering Mogadishu is the shiny terminal building of the city's Aden Adde International Airport. Refurbished by a Turkish company that ... a 10-year contract to manage the airport, the terminal building

... reopened in January 2018 in a ceremony attended by Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Though this city of over 2 million people still has a long way to go before it can fully regain its past glory. Dozens of war-scarred buildings still remind us of the fighting that engulfed the city for years. The Somali capital continues to make the headlines for all the wrong reasons: two of Mogadishu's better-known hotels were attacked by Al-Shabaab terrorists in July and November 2015, and a Lido Beach restaurant and the city's piazza Jardin were targeted by the group in January and February, respectively. Many high-profile politicians and businessmen routinely arrive at meetings in the company of heavily armed bodyguards. However, there is hope that things are turning around.

A bird's-eye view

A stroll through some of its once-devastated districts reveals how much Mogadishu has changed. The central business district is once again a bustling commercial activity. Some of the street stalls along the city's main boulevard, Xamar Al-Hubtooma, could match any in Dar es Salaam in Tanzania or Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. On some mornings I can see foreign-flagged container ships offshore on the distant horizon, waiting their turn in the blue waters of the Indian Ocean to enter Mogadishu's main seaport.

The rooftop of one of the tallest buildings in Mogadishu affords a bird's-eye view of the city, with some of its best-known landmarks underscored: the Turkish Embassy, the Jazeera Palace Hotel, the offices of the Hormuud telecommunications company, and the Koonis football stadium.

As I watch a modern jet take off from the seaside runway of Aden Adde International Airport, I look into the future and see a thriving Mogadishu that embodies the resilient spirit of its inhabitants. That is the city that my generation of Somalis will hopefully bequeath to our children and grandchildren.

People walk home after visiting a market in the Hodan district of Mogadishu, Somalia. UN Photo/Ilyas Ahmed

INTERVIEW

Somalia charts a new path

— Nicholas Kay

Nicholas Kay, a former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia, completed his assignment at the end of 2015. For over two years, he was actively involved with Somalis in charting a new path for a country that is trying to come back from years of conflict. In this interview with *Africa Renewal's* **Franck Kuwonu**, he talks about his time in Somalia and what lies ahead for the country.

Nicholas Kay, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM).

Africa Renewal: What was it like helping chart a new path for a country that has suffered for so long from conflicts?

Nicholas Kay: This is the first time in more than 25 years that the United Nations has been able to play a strong, constructive role in helping a political process put the country back together. In 1996, the UN left Somalia in real disarray. In 2013 we returned with the political mission of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia which I led. It was a time full of hope and challenges of a country coming together rather than a country falling apart. Personally, it was a fantastic professional opportunity.

How challenging was it to provide security to the people?

Somalia is one of the most dangerous places in the world for the United Nations to operate. The Al-Shabaab terrorist group poses a real threat not just to UN staff but also to any other international presence on the ground. What we have shown is that with the right security measures and support, it is possible to stay in Somalia and deliver. Now the UN has established a firm presence in Mogadishu and across the country and we are there to stay, there is no doubt about it. The Somali people are greatly encouraged by the UN presence there and by the commitment, courage and dedication of the UN staff.

The country is also known for its perennial political squabbling fuelled mainly by clan rivalry. Were these easy to manage?

It was easy to manage for two reasons: Somalis are actually very political people. They are used to sitting down together and talking, negotiating and making deals. Secondly, it's fortunate that after about 26 years of conflict, Somalis have decided now is the time to turn the page and commit themselves to building a new country.

Arrangements that led to the creation of a parliament in 2012 were criticised. Some say they lacked proper legitimacy. Were these criticisms justified?

The transition in 2012 that established the Federal government, parliament and the installation of the President was of the traditional type, with elders and their clans selecting the members of parliament, who then selected the president. So, the organizations that I was working with had a great deal of legitimacy in local terms and they were certainly nationally represented, but I would not say it was democratic. When I was in Somalia we were aiming at holding democratic elections in 2016. That may not be possible because the security situation in the country and political progress has not been sufficient to allow elections to happen. So in the absence of that, what we have done is to help Somalis put together a process that is more inclusive and more representative than what happened in 2012.

How inclusive and representative will the process be?

It will involve electoral colleges meeting in the federal member states that are now in place. There will be several hundred people in each location and there will be a choice of candidates to vote for, with guarantees that women and youth will be represented in a future parliament. I think it's a good step forward but it's not the whole nine yards. However, there are some stakeholders who are not content with the model that's been chosen. There is need to agree on a very clear and detailed roadmap for the period 2016-2020 before the elections.

At the end of your mission you warned that a lack of economic advancement could imperil the progress made?

More than 70% of the Somali population are under the age of 35 and for them a whole generation has suffered from the civil war. Literacy levels are very low. Certainly the country is making political progress and seeks to become a functioning federal state with institutions accountable to the people and delivering better services. It is a slow and painful process but it is happening. Security is improving and the economy is reviving. But outside of Mogadishu, up in the northeast and parts of the south and central part of Somalia, the people are still very desperate and poor. So, security and political progress will disappear if in the next five to 10 years the economic recovery does not happen and children cannot go to school and graduates cannot get jobs.

Going forward, are there any benchmarks or landmark events to watch out for?

The big event in 2016 should be the elections — parliamentary elections in August and then presidential elections in September. It will be a great landmark for Somalia if they achieve those on time and stick to the rules that they themselves have created for this process. It will be a process owned, led, and conducted by the Somalis themselves.

Speaking SDGs in African languages

BY **KINGSLEY IGHOBOR**

As Ntiokam Divine from Cameroon sees it, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are high-sounding concepts crafted in the specialized parlance of development experts.

To make the concepts comprehensible to a wider audience, especially among the grassroots population, 33-year old Divine is on a mission to translate the SDGs into Africa's many local languages using terminology understandable to all.

His strategy involves training influential community members, particularly young people, who will in turn educate their communities using translated texts.

On December 29 of last year, Mr. Divine launched training for 30 members of various youth, women's and civil society groups in the capital, Yaoundé, as part of the African Youth SDGs Training Program. Although the training was in English, he told the trainees that the SDGs need to be taken to the people's doorsteps.

After the group translates the SDGs into Cameroonian local languages—Ewondo, Shupamum, and Basaa—the training programme will work on establishing SDG clubs in primary, secondary and tertiary schools and get influential community members to be SDG ambassadors in their respective localities.

"By ensuring that youths understand that being part of the global discussion is an opportunity for them to address issues relating to their future, African youths can better appreciate the SDGs," Mr. Divine told *Africa Renewal* in an interview. Each of the trainees signs a pledge, committing to intense community mobilisation in support of the SDGs.

So far Mr. Divine, a longtime activist who has participated in the International Youth Council, Earth Charter and Children of the Earth, has translated the SDGs into 20 local languages in his native Cameroon, as well as into local languages of Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria.

In Nigeria the SDGs were translated into Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa, the country's main ethnic languages. There is also a Swahili version, which will be distributed to communities in Swahili-speaking countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Zanzibar, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as parts of Zambia, Mozambique, Malawi, Somalia, and the Comoro Islands.

Ntiokam Divine

Inspired youth

Mr. Divine's wanderlust makes him a good fit for his current undertaking. He has travelled over the back roads of Cameroon and to close to 100 countries around the world. "I was inspired by my mother to be a committed community development worker like her," he says. "She encouraged me to empower youths in rural communities across Africa."

Mr. Divine's breakthrough moment was in 2009, when he successfully organized the Stand Up campaign to promote the MDGs in Cameroonian schools. The success of that campaign alerted the various UN agencies to his unique mobilization skills. Later he took part in the Voices of Youth project of UNICEF.

He also supports the work of the UN Commission for Sustainable Development, raising awareness of the environment in communities as well as engaging young people in ways to address climate change challenges.

Mr. Divine, who holds a degree in environmental chemistry and grants management from the University of Buea, is co-chair for the Climate Development African Youth Platform, which mobilises young people on climate change issues along with the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa. In this role he moderates discussions on community climate-smart agricultural activities. He is also a global youth digital advocate for the SDGs.

Translating the SDGs into indigenous African languages appears both enterprising and ambitious. Despite current funding challenges, Mr. Divine maintains that "there is no other way for the majority of Africans to be rallied in support of the SDGs...I have had to use mostly my own little resources to organize trainings and public communication campaigns. The young people who have bought my idea have volunteered to assist in translation in the various countries. But more needs to be done."

Mr. Divine intends to continue to organize training for young people in various countries and hopes to enlist the support of the UN and other organizations working to raise awareness of the SDGs. While translation has been going apace, ensuring that the translated texts elicit the desired feedback from the target audience is the bigger quest.

Slow progress in Burundi ...

from page 3

deteriorate, could cause greater tragedy for civilians in a region with a history of ethnic conflict. The African Union and human rights groups have called for stronger international police and military presences in Burundi.

However, the UNHCR said in a recent published statement, "Despite recent high-level efforts to engage the government, we have not seen significant improvement in the security and human rights situation on the ground. The deteriorating economic situation is also a cause for concern which could trigger further displacement."

Drones: keeping a watchful eye on Africa

BY PAVITHRA RAO

A UN unmanned aerial vehicle in the DRC. *UN Photo/Abel Kavanagh*

Operated either autonomously based on a pre-programmed flight plan or by remote control, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), popularly known as drones, are now being deployed in Africa for a variety of missions.

Mostly found in military and special operation applications, UAVs are increasingly finding uses in civil and recreational applications.

Dating back to the early 20th century, drones initially provided practice targets for training military personnel. Their development moved into high gear for combat missions during the conflicts in Vietnam and the Middle East.

A typical drone weighs no more than 25 kg, travels at a speed of 160 km per hour and can fly to a height of 150 metres.

Drones are being used in Africa today to track poachers, to gather vital agricultural information to help farmers with their crops, and as an intelligence tool to help the military anticipate and prepare against danger.

For the endangered elephants in the Congo region of sub-Saharan Africa, drones could just help end the current elephant and rhino poaching crisis. In a 2015 test by Air Shepherd Technology, a US-based non-profit organization, in partnership with the Lindbergh Foundation, drones were found to be effective in spotting poachers and alerting nearby rangers over giant areas of parkland.

About 20,000 elephants were killed in 2014 alone, according to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), a non-profit group, and there are fears that the death toll could rise in the coming years.

In many areas park rangers are incapable of covering big swaths of the park.

In an article for the magazine *National Geographic*, Oliver Payne writes that drones can complement the efforts of park rangers and others to provide comprehensive poaching data. "New data is acquired daily from drones, tour operators, rangers on patrol, and GPS collars on individual animals. In aggregate, the analytics reveal patterns of poaching attacks and can predict with 90% accuracy where poachers will strike."

In addition to saving the lives of elephants and rhinos, the drone technology is being tested in Uganda and parts of Europe to deliver vital agricultural information to farmers through high-resolution pictures. Such information includes exact acreage of land and what portions of the land are under- or overused.

Although some farmers can also rely on satellite imaging, drones have better capabilities because they fly closer to the land and can bypass visual obstructions such as tree canopies and clouds to get high-resolution pictures.

The International Potato Centre (CIP), a Peru-based organization that focuses on food security in the developing world, conducted drone tests in January on potato farmlands in Tanzania. The drones captured images of 14 varieties of sweet potatoes, as well as detected diseases that can potentially destroy the crops.

Drones are also increasingly being used to monitor conflict areas around the world. Currently the United Nations plans to use drones for surveillance purposes (see page 34) in war zones in sub-Saharan Africa. Experts believe that drones can identify pertinent information, including the details of tyre treads, license plates and even bullets, all of which are vital for troops' operational preparedness.

A UN expert panel on technology and innovation reports, "The capacity of aerial visualisation is coming to everyone, in every setting — agriculture, disaster response, conflict — and we say that the member states need to take a look at empowering peacekeeping missions more broadly as part of an overall orientation towards technology to strengthen their hand."

Despite their often useful purposes, drones come under strict and in some cases prohibitive regulations in Africa. Countries that regulate drones include Kenya, Namibia and South Africa, although the rules are often muddy.

In South Africa, drone rules enacted in 2015 impose a 10-year jail sentence for illegal drone use — and are considered by some residents as unfriendly to private development.

A total ban on drones for civilian use was imposed by Kenya in January 2015.

In Nigeria, however, the government intends to incorporate drone technology into existing security systems for efficiency while also seeking the support of the international community to help combat insecurity of the country's waterways.

It was not long ago that drones were a figment of a science fiction writer's imagination, but now they have gained popularity. ●

BOOK REVIEW

Made in Africa: Industrial Policy in Ethiopia

by Dr Arkebe Oqubay
OUP, 2015, 384p; £55.00

For years, African countries have been told that the road to industrialization is long and full of intractable obstacles. This view has now been challenged in a book written by someone who has been at the centre of policymaking in one of the continent's fastest-growing economies — Ethiopia — for more than two decades.

The book is an insightful scholarly work based on detailed research covering three important economic sectors in Ethiopia: cement, floriculture, and leather and leather products.

Although the book concerns industrial policymaking in Ethiopia, the findings and policy conclusions "have a wider relevance beyond Ethiopia". In fact, the originality and the value addition of the book lie in its implications for other African countries and in the lessons it offers to those engaged in policy formulation and implementation.

Using concrete examples, the book demonstrates that industrial policies work better when they are designed to be

sector-specific. In other words, policies that work in one industry or sector may not necessarily work in another.

These are significant and useful policy messages, but the book's most striking and perhaps most original contribution is how the author links all these findings with the importance of "policy independence", which enables a developmental state to learn by doing, by copying and by making mistakes and learning from failure. "Government policy learning" as well as "collective learning" of government and key stakeholders in the economy is seen as critical for effective policy formulation and implementation.

Indeed, the book's ultimate message can be summarized as follows: Active industrial policy based on continuous policy learning is a *sine qua non* for diversification into more dynamic sectors such as manufacturing. Manufacturing in turn is critical for economic transformation because it lends itself to productivity improvements and learning by doing, and because of its potential for linkages and economies of scale.

The author's overall message for African countries is simple: know where you want to go first, and with a development-focused proactive state willing to keep its policy independence and to learn from others and its own mistakes, you will reach your destination.

In other words, determine your own destiny and don't expect others to do it for you. This book should thus be required reading for policymakers in Africa.

Taffere Tesfachew is the director, Division for Africa, LDCs and Special Programmes, UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

APPOINTMENTS

UN Photo

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has appointed **Lieutenant-General Balla Keïta** of Senegal as force commander of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). Lt-Gen. Keïta has most recently served as acting force commander of MINUSCA. He succeeds Maj-Gen. Martin Chomu Tumenta of Cameroon.

UN/Pierre Michel Virot

Major General Hassen Ebrahim Mussa of Ethiopia has been appointed as force commander of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). Previously he was the head of the Peacekeeping Coordination Centre in the Ethiopian Armed Forces since 2009. He succeeds Lt-Gen. Birhanu Jula Gelalcha, also of Ethiopia.

UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

Jeremiah Nyamane Kingsley Mamabolo of South Africa has been appointed as deputy Joint Special Representative for the African Union - United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). Mr. Mamabolo has served as ambassador and Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations since 2013. He succeeds Abiodun Oluremi Bashua of Nigeria.

AMISOM Public Information

Mahamat Saleh Annadif of Chad has been appointed as special representative for Mali and head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). Most recently, Mr. Annadif served as the African Union special representative and head of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). He succeeds Mongi Hamdi of Tunisia.

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